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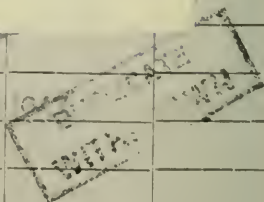
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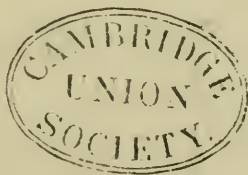


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"SCENES" IN THE COMMONS.

“SCENES”
IN THE COMMONS.

BY
DAVID ANDERSON.



LONDON:
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1884.

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THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.

DEAR READER,

Everything narrated in this little book I have seen with my own eyes or heard with my own ears.

Believe me,

DEAR READER,

Your willing Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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SCENES IN THE COMMONS.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IS LIKE.

No educational test or mental qualification is demanded of a candidate seeking to become a Member of the House of Commons, although, after having obtained the right to add M.P. to his name, it is expected that he will be able to sign the Roll of Parliament. Our overdone system of competitive examination applies to tide-waiters and letter-carriers, not to legislators. If the aspirant be capable of inditing his own electioneering placards and of addressing a ward meeting, on the topics of the day, with tolerable fluency, so much the better, if not, the agent will see that the placards are written and the speeches made by competent persons—for a consideration.

Prior to the passing of the Corrupt Practices Act last year, it was generally an expensive business to get into Parliament, and even now the would-be county, city, or borough member must expect to pay somewhat dearly for the desired privilege. And, so long as the chosen one has the honour of representing a constituency at St Stephens, there will be a constant drain on his purse. The local charities will look to him for support, and he will be invited to contribute to the fund

for restoring the local pump. It matters not whether the candidate be young or old, highly educated or profoundly ignorant, wise or stupid, narrow-minded or tolerant to a fault, a pietist or a sceptic, but it is all-important that he should have, or affect to have, political party bias. In his appeal to the electors he must infer either that Mr Gladstone is a monster and only the Tories can save the nation, or that Mr Gladstone is an angel and the Tories are but waiting their opportunity to tear up Magna Charta and repeal the Bill of Rights.

Chosen, for the most part, by party wire-pullers, on account of wealth, family connections, or local influence, persons, fit and unfit, capable and incapable, find their way into the House. Raw lads fresh from college, timid and unready, or shallow and impertinent, the latter taking upon themselves to hector and sneer at wise and experienced leaders grown grey in the service of the State. Parvenus anxious to push their way into society, advocates with an eye to the coif, ambitious aldermen, mere political adventurers, and keen-witted delegates of Commercial Companies, are made equal with statesmen of the highest culture, renowned for knowledge, for patriotism, and for persuasive eloquence. I am far from saying that a more representative assembly would be likely to result from any practicable system of competitive examination. Moreover, we are about to consider the House of Commons as it is—not to speculate on what it ought to be.

During the session, which usually lasts from some date in February to about the middle of August, the House meets at four in the afternoon of Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and, unless it is counted out, on the attention of the Speaker being called to

the fact that less than a quorum—forty members—are present, seldom rises before midnight, and occasionally protracts its wordy labours beyond the dawn. On Wednesday business begins at noon, and invariably finishes at six P.M. Sometimes, particularly toward the end of the session, there are morning sittings from two until seven, followed by evening debates beginning at nine, and continued without fixed limit of duration. Saturday sittings are only resorted to under pressure of arrears of work, or in order to facilitate urgently demanded legislation.

The evenings of Monday and Thursday are called Government Nights, when Bills in progress have precedence of Notices of Motion.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays are supposed to be set apart for private members. On Tuesdays Notices of Motion precede Bills in progress. Hence Tuesdays are devoted to "academic discussion." On Wednesdays Bills come first.

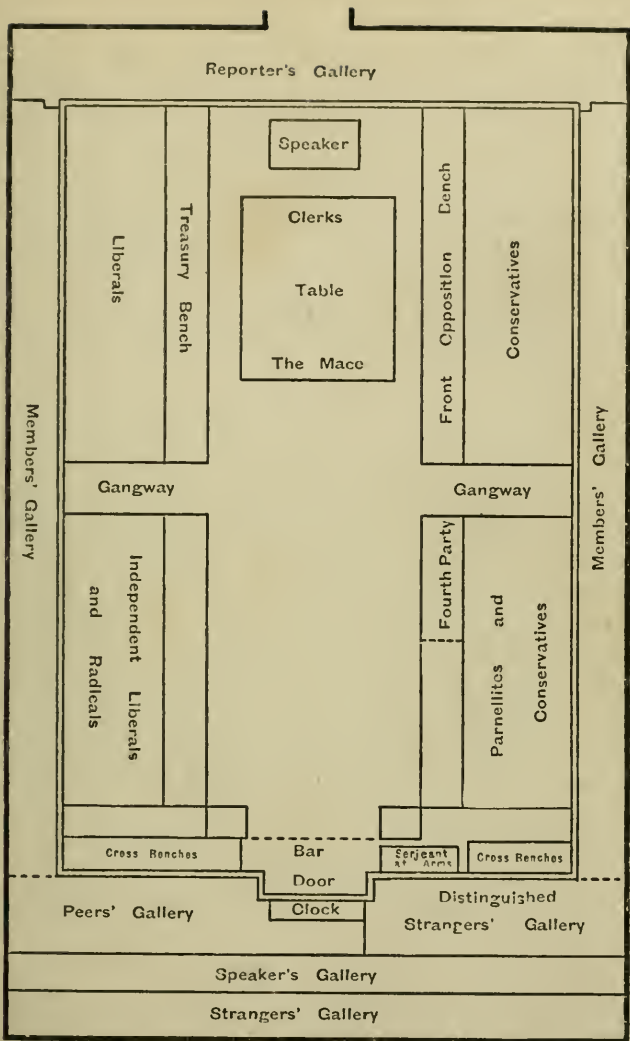
Friday evening, nominally a Government, is really a private member's night, inasmuch as the first Order of the Day is bound to be for the consideration of Supply. And when money is asked for, any member may raise an extraneous discussion, according to the constitutional precept that questions of grievance come before Supply.

It is a theory of the Commons that if the proposer of an abstract resolution, such as—"That in the opinion of this House the time has arrived when roast-beef ought never to be served at table without horse-radish," gains a majority of votes in a division, Government ought to take the matter in hand with as little delay as possible. Private members, however, have not much opportunity of adding to the Statutes without the consent and assistance of the Treasury Bench. This point is worth dwelling on,

because most of us must have heard earnest and active politicians, outside the House, talk wildly of what they would do, if only some constituency were far-seeing enough to return them to Parliament. They would, forthwith, as doubtless they fondly believe, pass this measure and that, and generally reform the Constitution. But the reality is very different from their imagining. Leave to introduce their Bills is, for the most part, all they would get. And thereafter would come the Murder of the Innocent. When, however, the People speak out in favour of an alteration of, or addition to the law, an Act of Parliament, embodying their wishes, is generally as good as passed.

Every sitting of the House is inaugurated with prayers, read by the Chaplain, who comes in with the Speaker—officially robed and wigged—and the Serjeant-at-Arms, attired in Court-dress, carrying the mace, which he deposits upon the end of the table furthest from the chair. The religious ceremony is of short duration, and while it proceeds members stand up, face to the wall. Strangers are admitted to the uncomfortable place near the roof allotted to them, and allowed to participate as auditors and spectators of the function; but the gentlemen of the Press, for some occult, though doubtless sufficient reason, are excluded. They congregate in the dim twilight of the ante-room in rear of their gallery, ready to scramble hurriedly through the door to their seats, so as not to lose a word of what may be subsequently spoken.

While the Speaker continues to occupy the chair, no member, except the mover of a resolution, may make more than one speech; he, however, has a right of reply. And during any stage of a Bill the mover of an amendment, raising a new question, enjoys a similar privilege.



* * * Those portions outside the double lines are raised above the floor.

But when the Speaker vacates the chair, and the mace is laid to rest under the table, the House is said to be in Committee, and every member has a right to speak once upon each amendment. Sometimes hundreds of amendments are handed in. This is the Obstructionist's opportunity, and it is made the most of. Endless unprofitable talk in Committee was one of the prime causes of the *clôture*.

The accompanying plan should prove of service to such as may be unacquainted with the topography of the Chamber.

The seats in the House are not formally reserved. Even the Prime Minister has no place which really belongs to him. Exception, however, is made in the case of a member to whom the thanks of the House have been voted "in his place." If my memory serves, Sir de Lacy Evans, M.P. for Westminster, was the last person so honoured; and the seat from which he heard the thanks of the House read out to him became his for so long as he remained in the lower chamber. On the other hand, any member who chooses to come in before the proceedings begin, may, by putting his hat upon a seat, secure that location for himself during the continuance of the sitting. There exists, however, an unwritten etiquette, in accordance with which old members long accustomed to a particular situation, and the occupants of the two front benches above the gangways, are left in undisturbed possession of their right by courtesy.

It may not be generally known that the House of Commons is not large enough to accommodate all the elect of the constituencies, and it is a misnomer to say that an elected member has obtained a "seat" in the House. His position at the head of the poll entitles him to get one—if he can—no more.

On "Field Nights," when it is expected that some popular chiefs will make set orations, every bench upon the floor is occupied, and even the gangways—unlike those of a theatre, under the supervision of the Lord Chamberlain—are utilised by honourable members; while others crowd into the side galleries, and even throng the doorway under the clock, outside the precincts of debate. The seatless ones are naturally vexed at this, and sometimes cry out, personally or by deputy, for a new and larger chamber. Mr Gladstone, however, contends that the present House is big enough, and declines to support the demand.

Toward the end of May of the first session of the present Parliament, Mr Serjeant Simon made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a Standing Order to the effect "that any member might obtain a seat by affixing his name thereto, and not otherwise, at half-past three o'clock, and not earlier, or afterwards, before the House meets at the usual hour, and not earlier than half-an-hour before the hour of meeting when the House meets for a morning sitting, provided that the member so affixing his name be present at prayers, and that Mr Speaker do give orders to the doorkeepers accordingly." And Mr Mitchell Henry, a loyal Irishman, who sits below the gangway on the Liberal side, on another occasion made a similar appeal to the Speaker. He enquired whether the rule by which a member was permitted to take possession of a seat in the House for the evening by placing his hat thereon did not involve the use of the real working hat which the rest-seeker had in wear at the time, and not a colourable substitute—a mere dummy. He drew a lamentable picture of the misdirected intelligence of honourable members who kept the rule to the ear and broke it to

the hope by coming down to the House with two hats—one to shield their brows from the weather, the other to secure their seats. Instead of being shocked at the account of an action, which displays a more than Machiavellian spirit of intrigue, the House, as *particeps criminis* in the offence complained of, laughed consumedly. Mr Mitchell Henry, however, by no means content, desired further to ask the Speaker whether it was consistent with the rules of the House to reserve a seat merely by placing a piece of paper or a card upon it. Thereupon Mr Speaker, in a manner most dignified and stately, informed the honourable gentleman and the assembled Legislature that the hat placed upon the seat should be the veritable hat of the wearer, not a spare or odd one brought by design to serve a purpose. The custom had, he intimated, been in force for many years, and it presupposed that an honourable member was in immediate attendance upon the House. A piece of paper or a pair of gloves, Mr Speaker ruled to be insufficient as a seat-securer. Nothing has yet been done for the benefit of late comers. The custom of the House continues to be: "First come, first served,"—and the rest nowhere.

Forty-nine times out of fifty there is a large attendance, after prayers, during the period devoted to answering questions, when both idle and pushing though not otherwise prominent members can make sure of attracting a modicum of attention. Honourable gentlemen desirous of interrogating Ministers are required to hand in their queries to the Clerk of the House in time to admit of the supervision of the Speaker, who takes care that every question is confined to assumed matters of fact—the expression of opinion not being permitted under the guise of the search after

knowledge. All the questions, duly numbered, are printed at length in the notice paper, and until lately were read out by enquiring legislators. This practice involved a considerable waste of public time, and, as the result of severe newspaper criticism, gradually fell into disfavour. The custom now is for a member, when it comes to his turn, and he is called on from the Chair, to rise in his place and say: "I beg to ask the Right Honourable Gentleman," or, as it may be "the Noble Lord at the head of the Such or Such department the question which stands in my name," or, "question number one," or whatever the number may be. Then the Noble Lord or the Right Honourable Gentleman usually replies, sometimes with a direct answer, not unfrequently with a subterfuge, and often at inordinate length.

There is no valid reason why the reply of the Minister should not almost always be printed side by side with the question; and were this suggestion adopted, about four hours' time every week might be saved. Members frequently ask questions of which they have not given formal notice—a valuable privilege whereby necessary information may possibly be elicited during times of excitement consequent on important events at home and abroad. Ministers may, in their discretion, decline to answer all such informal attempts to wring their secrets from them, in which case the baffled member generally gives notice that he will ask his question in due form at the earliest convenient opportunity, or call attention to the subject on going into Committee of Supply. More, he may intimate that he will conclude his remarks with a motion for the adjournment, and having obtained the support of forty members, may make a speech and so induce an irregular debate,

thereby disarranging the business set down in the Paper.

A Cabinet Minister or other member of the Government has a perfect right to refuse to answer any question that may be put to him, so long as he is able to base his refusal on the ground that the inquiry is improper or unconstitutional, or that to give an answer would be contrary to the interests of the State. Questions on foreign policy are frequently evaded in this manner, especially when our relations with nations beyond seas are in a critical condition.

At least one half the questions asked in the House of Commons are trivial, and it is probably not unfair to assume that certain comparatively obscure members take this method of showing their constituents in the provinces that they are actively employed at St Stephens. The reporting associations which supply news to those country papers not directly represented in the gallery, invariably telegraph question and answer, and any incident to which they may give rise, at length, to the editor of the "local" organ. Next day, or next week, there will appear a "leader," probably beginning with some such words as these : "It will be seen, by referring to another column of the paper, that our respected member, Mr Badger, last (Tuesday?) evening in the House of Commons obtained from the Home Secretary a public assurance that the case of our fellow townsman, Mr Jones, fined five shillings by Thomas Draco, Esquire, of Harshly Hall, for unintentionally killing Mr Draco's cat while out rabbit shooting in a field contiguous to that gentleman's estate, shall be duly considered, and in case there may have been any miscarriage of justice the Home Office will not hesitate to intervene in favour of the liberty of the subject. Mr Badger, a true patriot,

an eloquent and active ornament of the legislature, &c."—and so on for a column at least.

Mr Badger, M.P., is profoundly sensible, we may be sure, of the electioneering value of coming to the front at question time.

From four until half-past seven in the afternoon the House is full, but during what is known as the "dinner-hour," which extends to ten or a little later, it is, as a rule, comparatively empty, save for a few honourable gentlemen waiting their turn to speak, and a sprinkling of others interested in avoiding a count out. One or two members of the Government usually keep their seats, watching upon the unforeseen, and so the debate—though it may happen to be of imperial importance—drags on for some three hours, less an interval of twenty minutes during which Mr Speaker is supposed to partake of a sustaining refectio in his private room.

According to what Mr Gladstone calls the "usage of Parliament," it is not considered etiquette for a minister to make an important speech in a thin House during the dinner hour. It was this blundering etiquette which led to the collapse of the intended Egyptian debate on the opening night of the session of 1884. Mr Bourke moved an amendment to the Address, which was seconded by Baron Henry de Worms, condemning the Egyptian policy of the Government. But, though it had been arranged that Sir Charles Dilke should reply, that Right Honourable Baronet was not in his place when the Baron sat down. Sir Charles had either gone out to dinner, or did not care to address some forty members during the slack time of the sitting. And as no one else on the Ministerial side ventured to fill up the gap, the intended demonstration ended in a fiasco.

For a considerable number of hours, four times a

week, the bores and the specialists do most of the talking. They come provided with volumes of notes and rolls of references. They stutter and stammer, and repeat themselves in endless mazes of feeble statement, vexatious iteration, and pointless argument. Some, though they lack ideas, are voluble; while others, full of matter, are altogether untrained as speakers. Happily the bores are seldom fully reported except in the newspapers published in the places whence they come, otherwise than with the formula: "After a few words from Mr So and So." Many bores attribute the sound judgment of the reporters to personal prejudice against them as individuals. That is not my opinion. It is true that from time to time a sensible speech may be inadequately reported or neglected altogether, but, on the whole, substantial justice is done, alike to the orators and to the reading public. If it should happen that during the dinner hour a popular or eloquent politician rises to address the Chair, the House fills with wonderful rapidity. But if the attractive member be followed by one of the bore tribe, the chamber as quickly presents the appearance of a desert of green morocco. At the right moments attentive auditors "come like shadows, so depart."

The dinner hour is commonly taken advantage of to try the ruse of a count out, frequently for the mere love of mischief, and with little if any hope or desire of securing an adjournment. There are three members, whom I will not name, two from Ireland, and one representative of a small Conservative borough, who specially delight in this questionable kind of fun. Aware of the sparse attendance, one of these honourable gentlemen will rush in from the lobby, or another will rise from his seat, and with affected seriousness

cry out: "Sir, I beg to call your attention to the fact that forty members are not present." Then the Clerk at the table turns the two-minute sand-glass, the electric-bells ring, and the messengers shout in stentorian tones the word, COUNT! And in troop a bevy of members, from dining-room, smoking-room, and library, anxious to keep a House. Some may have been disturbed in the middle of their evening-meal, others may have only just begun. Nevertheless, they are prompt to obey the call of duty and the admonition of the Whips, even though the joint cools and the wine grows flat while they are away. There are few if any evidences of ill-temper, men on both sides accepting the inconvenience as an incident of political warfare. When all the sand has run through the narrow waist of the glass, Mr Speaker, fully cognisant of the farcical character of the proceeding, stands up on the carpeted dais in front of the chair, and holding his cocked hat in his dexter hand, moving his arm with a gentle upward and downward motion, counts heads, first on his right, and afterwards, if necessary, on his left. "One, and two, and three, and four, and five, and six," and so on to "and forty," reckons the presiding officer. Without the slightest pretence of keeping the House thus made, the disturbed ones joyfully troop out again, and possibly the debate may languish for another hour or two, in the presence of half-a-dozen members, all told.

Besides the false alarms there are many successful Counts. Some take place late at night, others early in the morning,—sheer weariness of the subject in hand having driven members away. Probably the most galling kind of all to the honourable gentleman temporarily in possession of the floor may be described as follows: Mr Zealous is a private member, anxious to distinguish

himself by associating his name with a great metropolitan improvement. To that end he has formulated a scheme for covering London over with one vast glass roof. He and his secretary, between them, have got up the subject thoroughly, and an elaborate address, crowded with statistics, has been prepared, introducing the Arcade at Milan, the Passages of Paris and Brussels, and other interesting, appropriate matter, culled from books and foreign travel. Mr Zealous is prepared to cite a calculation of the amounts annually expended in umbrellas, Mackintoshes, goloshes, and mud-carts within the metropolitan postal area, and to prove, at least to his own satisfaction, that the original cost, notwithstanding the expense to the united parishes within the jurisdiction of the Board of Works, would somehow soon pay itself, and leave a handsome surplus to somebody. All his friends are in the secret of the scheme. It has been dilated on at provincial and parochial meetings ; it has formed the staple of his club conversation for months previous. At length, the enthusiastic municipal reformer, having drawn a lucky number in the ballot, finds himself first in the Orders of the Day some Tuesday or Friday evening. So to say, he has the House in his hand, the ball at his feet. Opening the Notice Paper, he reads with satisfaction :

“ MR ZEALOUS.—To call attention to the unprotected buildings and pavements of the Metropolis during wet and stormy weather, whereby considerable damage is done to valuable property ; and to move a resolution.”

Our friend has beaten up recruits on his own side. The men who habitually sit to his right and left, and the man immediately behind him, have undertaken to attend. House-neighbours, not quite so near, express their willingness to do what they can for him, “ consist-

ently with previous engagements," and his party Whips, without registering any formal promise, fill his mind with hope and joyous expectation. At the very least they will try to make and keep a House.

Behold, the moment of his long looked for triumph seems at hand. Entering betimes, Mr Zealous takes his seat, and arranges his mass of papers, some on the bench beside him, some in the trough in front of him, and the remainder in his hat. He knows exactly where to lay his hand on the various memoranda for a two hours' prepared oration. To-morrow he will wake up happy!—the hero of a hundred journals. Glancing nervously up at the gallery above the chair, he smiles to see the reporters all of a row, and the leader-writers and provincial correspondents behind them—sedate, attentive. The men on his right and left, and the man habitually behind him, have proved as good as their word. Alas! otherwise the House looks cold and bare. His eyes wander round the benches. "Ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen," he mentally reckons up. "Yes, thirteen, dear me, only thirteen" he murmurs, and heaves a deep, deep sigh!

What means that bulky figure sitting within the shadow of a side gallery, solitary, smiling? That is the shocking presence of the member for Bradgate,—famous in the annals of Counts Out. All hope, however, is not yet lost. He hears his name pronounced from the chair, and in a moment is on his feet.

The House may fill presently. Why not?

"Sir," says Mr Zealous, in faltering accents—far different from the confident tone he had intended to assume on this momentous occasion—"I rise to call the attention of this honourable House to the unprotected"—But here he is suddenly interrupted in the middle of his

first sentence by the rising of the member for Bradgate, who, sweeping the horizon of the chamber, with his snuff-box held at arm's-length before him, utters the well-known formula; and Mr Zealous resumes his seat, despairing, blanched of visage, too sorrowful for anger.

Then bells ring. Messengers shout. But all is unavailing. Two minutes pass. No one enters. The reporters pack up their papers and make off as the Serjeant-at-Arms removes the mace from the table, and the Speaker passes out behind the chair, and the kindly thirteen disperse. Mr Zealous, disappointed, baffled, melancholy—not so much, he imagines, for his own sake as for that of the Metropolis and its lost chance of being turned into a huge conservatory. He himself is among the last to retire. What must be the feelings of that counted-out member as he wearily wends his homeward way? It is a tragedy too profound for words!

The control of the public purse is the special safeguard of the Commons; it is a power which in former ages was freely employed to resist attempted encroachments of the Crown and to limit the royal prerogative. And economy is a trump card which both sides are only too glad to hold in the game of "General Election." Nevertheless, Supply attracts but a moderate amount of personal attention from the elect of the People. The Chancellor of the Exchequer having delivered himself of the annual Budget, and stated what amount of money will be required to carry on the business of the country for the ensuing year, the Government are naturally anxious to get the sum voted. Occasionally the Opposition, regular and irregular, attempt to frustrate their plans by prolonging abstract debates on nights when

Supply is set down, but sooner or later the Estimates are sure to come on. During the last session of the Parliament elected in 1874, an agreement was entered into which generally prevents any but Money Bills being taken after half-past twelve at night; and this Standing Order, advantageous in many respects, has the effect of delaying the discussion of Supply often until the small hours in the morning when members are tired and sleepy.

Moreover, part of the ordinary Supply is sometimes shunted until the end of the session. It is a rule to deal with this subject in Committee, when the same member may speak over and over again. But whether the Estimates be brought on early or late in the year, by day or at night, they seldom attract a large attendance. The dockyard representatives, sailors, and yachtsmen are to the fore when the expenses of the Navy come on for discussion; soldiers watch over the pecuniary interests of the Army; and Mr Parnell's faithful followers narrowly scrutinise the expenses for Ireland, overhauling the details of every petty salary and paltry allowance to English officials employed on the other side of St George's Channel. Yet soldiers, sailors, and Parnellites apply themselves separately to the performance of this important duty; and, divided, they are conquered by the combined forces of the party in power. At the very last of the session the remnant of Supply is rushed through pell mell. The attractions of moor and mountain, of sea and stream, of study and travel, far outweigh the desire for economy when it is the public money that has to be spent. I venture respectfully to suggest that if the ordinary national expenditure for the ensuing year were made the first continuous business of every spring session—following the debate on

the Address, and subject to the exigencies of foreign policy—the taxpayer would benefit by the innovation. It is surely a mistake to allow the Estimates to be yawned through at three o'clock of an August morning, after eleven hours of talking in a heated atmosphere. With a free Press, grievances would not fail to be heard, even though they might not precede the discussion of Supply in the House of Commons.

There is, however, an alternative method, though not necessarily a practicable one, suggested by the lately introduced Grand Committees. Mr Gladstone has long been of opinion that much time might be saved by adopting the principle of devolution, and that principle might surely be applied, at least experimentally, to the details of the national expenditure. Would it not be possible, I ask, to submit the Estimates for the Army and Navy, for Ireland, and for general purposes, to Grand Committees of experts impartially chosen from both sides? That is already practically done at the present time; and if it were to become the recognised rule of the House, the vice of late hours might be partially cured. It is not a gratifying sight to see ministers of the Crown slumbering upon the Treasury Bench, or chiefs of the Opposition taking “forty winks” while so-called discussion on Supply drowsily “draws its slow length along.”

It is no part of my plan to describe in minute detail the rules and regulations, or to explain the formal terms and proceedings of the House of Commons. Even this sketch would, however, be wanting without a brief account of the progress of an ordinary measure through the House from the time when, permission having been obtained, it is formally read the first time until, coming down in its final shape from the Lords, it awaits the Royal Assent.

An ordinary Bill having been read a first time as a mere matter of form, it is printed and circulated among members, and a day fixed for the second reading — on which occasion set speeches are the rule. Next it comes before a Committee of the whole House for the consideration of amendments, — unless, indeed, it be relegated to the consideration of a Grand Committee, — after which the Chairman of Committees reports such changes as may have been made. Only verbal amendments are permissible on the third reading. The bill, in its amended form, having escaped the dangers of the lower chamber, is taken by the clerk to the bar of the Lords. If the Peers approve, the measure is safe, if not it is either thrown out or made the subject of compromise, at a conference of delegates from both Houses.

Legislation is, as I have pointed out, seldom undertaken until public opinion is ascertained to be ripe for the work; and the force of this wonderful, mysterious public opinion is gauged by the result of elections, the attitude of the newspaper press, speeches made at public meetings, and by numerous signed petitions presented to the House. Very few, however, of the energetic private folk who thus petition “the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom in Parliament assembled” can have seen the unceremonious treatment accorded to their skins of parchment and rolls of autographs, within the House itself. The Honourable gentleman entrusted with the task of presentation having publicly stated the object and origin of the prayer, leaves his place, carrying the parcel along with him, and arriving at the table, drops it into the square, yawning mouth of a big black bag with drab-lining. All petitions are carefully considered by a committee of members, appointed for that purpose.

When the Corporation of London, Dublin or Edinburgh present a petition, there is a scene and a ceremony, a vision of scarlet and fur, the glint of gold, and much bowing. The Chair being duly occupied, the Sergeant-at-Arms comes slowly up the floor to the table, and hands a card to the Clerk who passes the same to the Speaker. Thereupon the bar—in form of a brass rail kept concealed behind a seat a little way in front of the door under the clock—is drawn across the confines of debate, and, let us say, a couple of sheriffs, gorgeous in official finery, step forward to the bar and make obeisance. “Sheriff Gog and Sheriff Magog,” says Mr Speaker with due solemnity, “What have you there?” Then the spokesman of the twain, once more bending low, holds aloft a roll of Parchment, and begs leave to present a petition by the Lord Mayor Alderman and Commons against—or for, whatever it may happen to be for or against. Whereupon the worthy citizens hand in their prayer and retire gracefully backwards, until gorgeous robe and gleaming chain are lost in the dim distance of the lobby.

The question is often asked, What is meant by the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds? It is a nominal office, in the gift of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, enabling a member of the House of Commons, by a constitutional fiction, to resign his seat. Membership of the Third Estate of the Realm, once obtained, is assumed to run an uninterrupted course from the date of the return to the General Election next ensuing, and a member, not in any other manner disqualified, can only give up his trust in one way, that is by accepting an employment of profit under the Crown, in which case he ceases to be a member until the constituency from whom he derived his representa-

tive position are pleased to re-elect him. It sometimes happens that members are anxious to withdraw, though only temporarily, in order to obtain a fresh mandate from their constituents ; or it may be that an elect of a county, city, or borough desires to retire altogether from the Parliamentary arena. The *modus operandi* is always the same. A formal application is made to the Minister for the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough, and Bodenham, in Buckinghamshire, or of the manors of Poynings, East Hundred, and Northstead, or the Escheatorship of Munster, all assumed to be offices of emolument ; and, if the Minister see no reason to the contrary, the application is forthwith granted.

As a matter of fact, these stewardships are not places of profit, but sinecures without salary, and the persons to whom they are given hold them by what may be called a tenure of grace. As soon as the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds is obtained it is resigned, that it may serve the same purpose again. Certain specified Government appointments, frequently held by Members of Parliament—being conferred by heads of departments, and not directly by the Crown—are exempt from the category of employments which demand resignation with a view to re-election ; such are the Under-Secretaries of State and the Surveyor-General of the Ordnance. Since the year 1867 a member already in office, accepting another post, does not thereby vacate his seat. Some writers doubt the strict legality of the form, on the ground that the Stewardship fails to embrace the full meaning of “a place of honour and profit under the Crown,” and strictly speaking that is so ; but, like Mercutio’s wound, “’twill serve.” The practice dates back about a hundred and thirty years, at which period the original object for which the post

was created had long ceased to exist. Chiltern is a ridge or series of chalky hills extending across the county of Bucks, not far south of the centre, reaching from Tring in Hertfordshire to Henly in Oxford, a district anciently covered with dense beechen wood, the resort of daring and desperate robbers, bold outlaws of the Robin Hood type, who led a more or less merry life "under the greenwood tree," at the expense of the peaceable farmers and villagers of the uplands. Inasmuch as it became necessary to clear the country of these banditti by bringing them to the rough-and-ready justice of those far-off days, the Crown appointed an officer called the Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds, whose duty it was to pursue and arrest the brigands, and provide them with a short shrift and a convenient halter. In course of time Chiltern became free from foot-pads, so that the active duties of the stewardship fell into desuetude, and the salary ceased to be paid. Yet the honorific office remained, a shell minus a kernel, and some time about 1750 a Minister of State applied it to its present purpose.

Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the time being, usually grants the Chiltern Hundreds without demur to any member applying for them, he may, in his discretion, refuse the application. The most notorious instance of the kind occurred during the session of 1842, when a Committee of the House of Commons sat "to inquire whether certain corrupt compromises had been entered into in specified boroughs, for the purpose of avoiding investigation into gross bribery alleged to have been practised in them." Fears of the exposure which might ensue created the greatest alarm, and several members, including the representative of Reading—one of the places implicated—made application for the office. The Chancellor of the

Exchequer, however, refused to comply with their request. The right honourable gentleman wrote a letter to the Member for Reading, in which he said : " Under ordinary circumstances I should not feel justified in availing myself of the discretion vested in me in order to refuse or delay the appointment for which you have applied, when sought for with a view to the resignation of a seat in Parliament. But, after the disclosures which have taken place with respect to certain boroughs, of which Reading is one, and after the admission of the facts by the parties interested, I consider that, by lending my assistance to the fulfilment of any engagement which may have been entered into as arising out of any such compromise, I should, in some sort, make myself a party to such transactions which I do not approve, and of which the House of Commons has implied its condemnation. I feel, moreover, that by a refusal of the means by which alone such engagements can be fulfilled, I afford the most effectual discouragement to the entering into similar compromises in future, and thus promote, so far as lies in my power, the intentions of the House of Commons." Consequently the Committee proceeded on its course, and the members implicated had to bear the brunt of the enquiry.

Among the exceptional incidents of the chamber are breaches of privilege, the bringing up of strangers to the bar, to answer charges of misconduct, the making of personal explanations by members, the arrival of messages from the Crown, the committal of prisoners to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, the suspension and expulsion of members, the voting of the thanks of Parliament for distinguished services, etc. Many such minor scenes in the Commons will be found described incidentally in the succeeding pages.

CHAPTER II.

"MEN OF LIGHT AND LEADING."

SIR STAFFORD NORTHCOTE.

FAR distant be the day when it shall devolve on the heirs, administrators, and assigns of the Right Hon. Sir Stafford Henry Northcote, Bart., C.B., D.C.L., elder brother of the Trinity House, yeomanry officer, and patron of four livings, to provide an epitaph for his monument. Yet when the inevitable time comes, as come it must, seven simple words will suffice :

HERE LIES THE PINK OF POLITICAL POLITENESS.

No other man in the House of Commons is more gracious than Sir Stafford, more considerate of others, more bland or gentle—alike to friends and foes. Sweetness and Light combine to make up the disposition of the former private secretary of Mr Gladstone. Ever and anon, for the sake of appearances, he may pretend to be a little angry, but the least observant can see that his mild violence is mere make-believe.

The rolling years have rolled him asunder from his old friend and patron, the Prime Minister of England. Yet, to this day, as Sir Stafford looks across the table, the gulf of time disappears, and the leader of the Opposition seems to see in the leader of the House—his master.

Lord Randolph Churchill in turn supports, in turn defies, his chief, setting up his own standard within

the leader's camp. What matters? The kindly, the beaming, the beneficent head of the Opposition but smiles upon him the more — accepting his uncertain service to-day, and doing the best he can without it to-morrow. The Parnellite, like a political stork, has built upon Sir Stafford's chimney-top for warmth. He has not driven him away. Ill-luck forbid! At worst the Irish faction lend an appearance of fulness to the left benches, and occasionally, though seldom, are useful to that side in a division.

Not that the Conservatives, as a party, are disloyal to their chief—as who among them could be to one himself so steadfast? In him "Manners are not idle, but the proof of loyal nature and of noble mind." Moreover, there can be no kind of doubt that if the great Conservative party could be strengthened, and welded together by a gracious deportment and a never-failing amiability, Sir Stafford Northcote would be their best and fittest leader.

Time has dealt kindly by him. Although sixty-six years old, he still retains as fine a head of hair as any statesman in Europe—thick, brown hair, guiltless even of an incipient tonsure—hair parted neatly on the left side, and brushed across the square, upright, though somewhat compressed, head. The fair eyes look rather shrewd than wise from beneath shaggy penthouse brows, and all the lower part of the agreeable straight-featured face is hidden by a luxuriant whitey-brown beard. He is tall and strong, and neatly dressed.

Sir Stafford is a ready debater and a good scholar; he was third in mathematics and first in classics, more than forty years ago. Every sentence of his speeches might be taken down verbatim in shorthand, and printed without correction. He has the gift of words;

and that description applies equally to his occasional and unprepared utterances and to his studied orations. He is never florid, seldom, if ever, eloquent. It is his habit to unwind his argument, or rather narrative, as if it were a long tape measure, increasing in length but not altering in breadth as it proceeds slowly but regularly from the neat shuttle of his understanding. Sometimes he is mildly satirical, but never, never unpolite! The gurgling stream of his sweet and slumbrous talk glides smoothly and safely along, emphasised here and there with an elegantly planted, unenvenomed home-thrust, here and there ornamented with a highly appropriate and strictly correct Latin quotation.

Not St Simon Stylites on his column, not Patience on a monument, smiling at Grief, ever displayed a greater measure of silent and persistent forbearance. Who is more industrious, who more assiduous, so long as assiduity can avail, than Sir Stafford? All the summer-time, when the sunshine, golden and beautiful, floods Palace-yard and glints upon the rippling Thames hard by, he sits, opposite his drawer in the table of the House, to the Speaker's left, with his knees bent, and his hands placidly resting, upon the bench, close to his sides, his beard resting on his bosom. Sometimes he will rouse himself to exchange a few words with Mr W. H. Smith, who sits beside him, or with Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, or Col. Stanhope, or other pillars of the great Conservative cause.

The fury of debate spends itself against his adamant gentleness in vain. The studied gibes of Sir William Harcourt do not affect him. Liberal thunders do not shake him from his calm. The clamour of his own party rises and falls behind him, unheeded. Mr Newdegate preaches, and Sir William Barttelot prosed,

in vain. The chief only smiles, and sometimes gently nods his head as if beating time to their periods. He waits always patiently until the time arrives for him to intervene.

Then, after many have spoken—often to little purpose—Sir Stafford comes deliberately and calmly to the task. There is immediate silence. Every one in the House respects him who is the incarnation of respectfulness to men of all parties. His style of oratory is essentially judicial; it is a summing up of the debate.

"Sir," he may say, "I think the House will admit that we have had a very interesting discussion on this important question, and I must say, speaking for myself, that the subject has been argued with good temper both on that side of the House and on this. The right hon. gentleman at the head of Her Majesty's Government has, if he will forgive me for saying so, slightly overstated his case, and the hon. member for Puddleborough, who sits behind him, has, I venture to submit, fallen into the same error. Now what does the honourable member for Puddleborough say? He says that my right hon. friend the late Secretary of State for the Out Department, at that time Chairman of the Go-Cart Committee, expressed different opinions when in office from what he holds at the present moment. Sir, I am inclined to suggest that an occasional diversity of opinion is not confined to either side of this honourable House. These things act and react. Like cures like. *Similia similibus curantur*. Now what does the right hon. gentleman the member for Birmingham say? The right hon. gentleman is all for peace. Well, Sir, no man in this House cares for peace more than I do. He says: 'Let the lords of the soil mind what they are at, for the time

may come when the poor folk will rise and take from them their homes and their wealth, and sit in their seats, and rule this land.' The House will observe that the right hon. gentleman, whose Saxon style we all admire, uses words of but one syllable ; yet I cannot agree with him for all that. At this late hour of the evening I do not think it advisable to protract the debate. Some abuses there may be, but of this I am quite sure, that my hon. friends who act with me are as anxious to do what is right and just as hon. members opposite. By the way, before sitting down, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether the Perambulators' Licensing Bill will be taken at the morning sitting to-morrow ? ”

Apart from the unswerving gentleness of his disposition, and his truly lovable nature, Sir Stafford is an English gentleman of the nicest sense of honour—a man beyond the reach of detraction.

Yet he is not “ the strong man, armed ”—supple of intellect, far-seeing, deep-thinking, unsparing of invective, enthusiastic, unquenchable—whom I nowhere detect in the Conservative arena, or upon the Conservative horizon.

LORD HARTINGTON.

No man in the House occupies a position more difficult or more anomalous than Lord Hartington. Nine years ago, Mr Gladstone, being then in the sixty-seventh year of his age, publicly announced to his supporters that, weary with the cares of office and sick of the clamour of opposition, he intended to retire from the active duties of the leadership of the Liberal party.

Many were the names proposed, of men thought suitable to be his successor, discussed and rejected, until at last, at a meeting held at the Reform Club, on the

afternoon of February 3, 1875—Mr John Bright in the chair—Mr Villiers proposed, and Mr Samuel Morley seconded, a resolution to the effect that the Right Honourable the Marquis of Hartington should be requested to assume the leadership.

At that time the noble Marquis had been in Parliament for the space of eighteen years, and had successively occupied the responsible positions of Lord of the Admiralty, Secretary of State for War, Postmaster-General, and Irish Secretary—first under Lord John Russell and subsequently under Mr Gladstone. Fortune had smiled upon his political undertakings, as she is wont to smile upon the Parliamentary labours of Dukes' eldest sons. Indeed, he had scarcely sat for two years in the House of Commons, when he moved a vote of want of confidence in the Administration of the late Lord Derby, and succeeded in toppling over the Government of "the Rupert of Debate."

In spite of the onerous and dignified offices which had fallen, over-ripe, at his feet, his closest friends did not at that time pretend—behind his back—that, intellectually, he towered above his compeers. They set him upon a high place for the sake of his rank and influence, and because it was generally believed by the Liberal wire-pullers that his leadership would be accepted without question by the wealthy and influential Whigs.

Wonderful changes have taken place within the past nine years. As the star of the advanced Radicals has risen, that of the old Whigs has waned. Sir Charles Dilke, sometime a pronounced Republican, is now a Minister of the Crown; Mr Chamberlain, who at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, in the summer of 1883, went "straight" for universal suffrage, is the bench-fellow of Lord Hartington, the pride of the Whigs.

Under the new *régime* Mr Bradlaugh may, and probably does, aspire to the Treasury Bench.

What, it may be asked, has become of the said great Whig party which the noble Marquis represents, and how can he hope to succeed to the leadership of Messrs Labouchere, Broadhurst, Briggs, Burt, Woodall, Joseph Cowen, T. B. Potter, and the rest of the tricolour element below the gangway, and yet remain a Whig?

Tall and robust of frame, broad across the shoulders, and thin in the flanks, with a small, well-developed forehead, partly concealed by dark hair, drawn downwards from the right temple across the left eyebrow, a long, high nose, and handsome brown beard, the noble Marquis looks every inch the man of birth and breeding. There is, however, a something in his deep-set eyes and protruding under lip which has not yet revealed its dormant secret to the Liberal party.

Dressed, in rough manly fashion, in a cutaway coat, light trousers, and heavy boots, he sits, more or less patiently, upon the Treasury Bench with his eyes closed, his arms folded, and his large, shapely white hands tucked within the inner joints of his elbows, his broad shoulders pressed against the back of the seat, and his long legs crossed straight before his body. His aspect betokens power and his voice authority.

The noble Marquis habitually treats some members of the Opposition, and particularly the Parnellites, with great hauteur, and his own side with lofty politeness. Towards the end of the first session of the present Parliament he announced the business of the House from day to day, and threatened the Opposition that unless they passed the measures of the Government with

all obedience, he should keep them from their shooting. And if any one dared to complain he would spring to his feet and fall upon him, with all his pride and all his passion roused, like a Viking moved to slaughter. He speaks at such times with wonderful declamatory force. The House might imagine, the noble champion of Chatsworth, in full panoply, astride his war-horse, spear in rest, "charging an army."

When Mr Gladstone is absent, Lord Hartington leads, and gets through the business in less time than the more renowned but more voluble commander-in-chief. When Mr Gladstone is present the noble Marquis is instantly relegated to comparative obscurity. As it is in office, so it was in Opposition, when he was the leader in name only. When it suited Mr Gladstone to play the chief he did so, apparently as indifferent to the feelings of his second in command as his lordship is indifferent to those of his political opponents. When however, during the ninth Parliament of the Queen, Lord Hartington was allowed the lead, it must be admitted that he made a great many long speeches—of surpassing dulness.

In those days he used, towards the latter end of a debate, to rise from his seat, and, stepping to the despatch-box, stand with his right knee crossed over his straightened left leg, and his right foot supported on his toes. He seldom changed his attitude, and often spoke for an hour or more with mechanical volubility and a plentiful lack of ideas.

Since 1880, he has greatly improved both as a debater and an orator. He has thoroughly mastered the affairs of India and of the War Office. His forte is attack, his fault pride. No man in the House is, however, possessed of a greater fund of reserve force.

MR W. H. SMITH AND MR CHAMBERLAIN.

The Right Honourable William Henry Smith and the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, although they are numbered among the leaders of opposite parties have much in common. Both are wealthy sons of fortunate traders, both are intensely practical men, apparently without an atom of sentiment or romance in their composition, both graduated at the School Board for Parliament, both are fluent speakers possessed of an easy mastery of dry facts, both were defeated in their first attempt to obtain a seat in Parliament, both quickly became conspicuous in the House, and both were raised to cabinet rank sooner than might have been expected, all things considered. Yet Mr W. H. Smith is a high Tory while Mr Chamberlain is an extremely advanced Radical.

Mr W. H. Smith defeated the late John Stuart Mill for Westminster in November 1868—proving that the electors of that city preferred the Conservative hard-headed man of business, to the Radical philosopher and political economist. In 1874 he was made financial secretary of the Treasury, and at the end of three years succeeded the late Mr Ward Hunt as First Lord of the Admiralty and was raised to cabinet rank. In opposition Mr Smith seldom asks questions and does not often make long speeches, although he is generally to the fore when matters concerning the Navy are under discussion. A solid, sturdy man, close upon sixty years of age, in appearance the very type of a merchant, the right honourable gentleman makes no effort to appear brilliant, witty, or sarcastic. When he has a case to put before the House he delivers himself with clearness and logical precision. He does not attempt

to clothe his ideas in imagery, does not seek after the graces of oratory or the portable coinage of epigram. Night after night he may be seen upon the front opposition bench,—the incarnation of stolidity.

Mr W. H. Smith suggests the idea of an Imperial contractor, who would be willing to send in an estimate for collecting the taxes and governing the country at so much per head, and would probably do the work cheaper than, and quite as well as it is done under the present system, and make a handsome profit into the bargain.

Mr Joseph Chamberlain—whom the Radicals of Birmingham delight to call "Our Joe," is still a young man—for the Treasury Bench. He was born in London forty-eight years ago, received his education at University College School in Gower Street, and subsequently became a partner in the firm of Nettlefold and Chamberlain, wood-screw makers, Birmingham. In 1874, soon after his father died, he retired from business. As member of a local debating society, chairman of the first Executive Committee of the Education League, chairman of the School Board, member of the Town Council, Alderman and—like Dick Whittington—three times Mayor, he won and kept the regard of his fellow-townsmen. At the general election of 1874 he opposed Mr Roebuck at Sheffield, but failed to secure the seat. But on Mr Dixon's retirement from Birmingham in the summer of 1876 he was chosen to fill his place. In opposition Mr Chamberlain occupied the seat now favoured by Mr Parnell, and from that position aired his well-known views in favour of the Gottenburg licensing system for public houses. On the accession of Mr Gladstone Mr Chamberlain was made a Cabinet Minister over the head of Sir Charles Dilke as a concession to the advanced Liberal wing, to whose exertions

the Premier was greatly indebted for his victory at the ballot boxes.

Mr Chamberlain answers questions shortly and to the point, and displays considerable aptitude in passing a Bill through its several stages. Tall and dapper, with plain features, dark hair neatly brushed, and small side whiskers, with a single eye-glass in his right eye, and never without an exotic in the button hole of his black frock coat, the President of the Board of Trade would pass among strangers for an eminently respectable banker's clerk. Compared with Mr Chamberlain, Mr Bright is a Tory; and Mr Bradlaugh—regarding his recent utterances on the subject of state socialism—a moderate Conservative.

MR BERESFORD HOPE.

Mr, or more correctly, Doctor Alexander James Beresford Beresford-Hope, M.P., D.C.L., youngest son of the author of "*Anastasius*," is a remarkable figure in the House of Commons. His features were once regular. His light, straggling hair is now turning grey, and his beard and moustache are informal, not to say ragged, in cut; his stature is short; his form more than inclines to *embonpoint*, and his oratorical actions are full of the stilted but circular grace of the "powder period."

You see him, as he rises in his place, stout and smiling. You see him bend forward the large circumference of his body, from where the hips once were, and give a little stamp with his little right foot, and make a large turn with his little fat hand, and droop his unkempt head over his left shoulder, and you hear him "coo!"

It has been said that he "chortles," but "cooing" is the better descriptive term. The sounds he makes are soft and dove-like, broken up with little interjectional and not unmelodious clearings of the throat, and little laughs at little jokes—apparently of his own composition. Voluble he is with a saccharine volubility, which flows with the elastic consistency of treacle dropping from an uplifted spoon.

He speaks often, and for a long time together; for the reporter's formula: "After a few remarks from Mr Beresford Hope," by no means describes what really takes place. In dulcet tones he taunts the Liberals with little touches of not ill-natured satire, ornamented with rhetorical images culled principally from the classics.

His mind is gentle, his tastes scholarly. Educated at Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge, he became a bachelor of arts at the age of twenty-one, and, though now a doctor of civil law, he still retains the fresh bloom of his scholastic bachelorhood. Like Cleopatra, whom he does not otherwise resemble, "age cannot wither nor custom stale" the "infinite variety" of his academical dandyism.

So sweet, so amiable! Nature may have originally intended him for a High Church curate, and forgetful as Nature sometimes seems, have flavoured his clergyship with a spice of pagan satire.

Who more fit than Mr Beresford-Hope to assist in founding the Ecclesiological Society? Who more fit to have purchased the ancient buildings of St Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury, and turned them into a college for missionary clergy?

In his bland and studious nature the classic and the gothic, the Christian and the Pagan meet and mingle.

Mrs Barbauld shakes hands with Sappho. The Parthenon hob-nobs with Westminster Abbey, and Marcus Aurelius goes out walking with St Chrysostom.

Is it any wonder that he became president of the Royal College of British Architects, or that he held that elevated rank for two years in succession, from 1865 to 1867?

Of Mr Beresford-Hope's proprietorial connection with the *Saturday Review* it would not be becoming to write at length. His acknowledged works are before the public, and there is no insuperable reason to suppose that the reader is unfamiliar with "Letters on Church Matters, by D.C.L.," and "English Cathedrals of the Nineteenth Century."

For a period of nearly forty years has Mr Beresford-Hope sojourned—with intervals of privacy—in the wilderness of Parliament. He sat as one of the members for Maidstone from 1841 to 1852, when he retired; but he was re-elected in 1857. At the ensuing General Election he proposed to the University of Cambridge and was refused. He appealed to Stoke-on-Trent in 1862, unavailingly, but three years later, was elected for that borough. Returning to the feet of his former love in 1868, the University of Cambridge accepted him; and, as an independent Conservative, he still represents that ancient, learned, and distinguished constituency. He loves books, bishops, and gothic architecture; and if his kindly nature can contain a hatred it is for Non-conformists.

For aught that is generally known to the contrary he may not decline to eat with Dissenters or to drink with them; but it is on record that he most positively objects to be buried in the same churchyard with them. Like unto those prophets of old who dwelt in caves of

the hill-sides about the sacred City of Jerusalem, and went up and down calling ancient Jewish society to repentance, and foretelling the as yet postponed end of the world, Mr Beresford-Hope, with his head on one side, and his hand in the air, prophesied, during the progress of the Burials Bill of 1880, the desecration in store for our parish churchyards.

In his mind's eye he beheld a Cantwell and a Stiggins bearding the Episcopacy on the very threshold of the Established Church. He saw with unconcealed horror the dreadful spectacle of unbaptized babies being buried in consecrated ground, and even women ministering and officiating at the grave-side.

Some day, said he—and there was a world of declamatory emotion in the broken treble of his voice—Honourable Members passing through their parish churchyards would behold a piety-intoxicated dissenting menad standing upon a tombstone, and haranguing a Nonconformist multitude. I will not say that the exact words given were the words of Mr Beresford-Hope, nor were his exact words taken down at the time, but the sense and the sentiment are the same, and I myself who heard him can vouch for the menad standing on the tombstone.

So far as can be made out, it has been the business of his Parliamentary career to look after the interests of the Protestant Church as by law established, to quell the aspiring spirit of Nonconformity, and champion the claims of Gothic architecture to the serious consideration of a utilitarian age given over to detached abominations faced with stucco. Gothic architecture as we know, is deservedly famous for beautiful and elaborate exteriors, and darkness and discomfort within, and as is said of the House of Commons itself, for a plentiful

supply of wainscoted corridors which lead nowhere, and for a multitude of windows which do not let in the light.

Very properly he venerates whatever is sanctified by age. He is himself among the most ancient and most respected members of the House of Commons.

MR JOHN BRIGHT.

John Bright, the Tribune of the People, has been misunderstood and misjudged ; has been mistaken for a maker of laws, whereas he is an artist in words. Now in the seventy-fourth year of his age, and a member of Parliament of forty-one years' standing, he has never yet had justice done to his splendid, peculiar, and remarkable career in the House of Commons.

One of the foremost political figures of the present century, his voice has been a power in the counsels of the nation for generations past, but in all that time he has been only three times a Minister, on every occasion under Mr Gladstone—in 1868, in 1873, and 1880—once as President of the Board of Trade, and twice as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He retired from the Cabinet in July 1882, on the ground that he could not agree with the Egyptian policy of the Government.

As an orator he is without an equal in the House of Commons, and probably in the civilized world. Like Mr Gladstone, he has a mellow and melodious voice and an inexhaustible store of words. Unlike Mr Gladstone, he is neither verbose nor parenthetical. His subject-matter rolls on clear, and broad, and deep, with the

flowing volume of a mighty river in its last course towards the sea.

His oratorical method is that of a maker, a poet, and even of a mosaic worker. His words are picked and chosen, and, whenever possible, of Saxon derivation. Mr Gladstone's English is Johnsonian, Mr Bright's Tennysonian. Johnson revelled in Latinised terms, Tennyson has striven, particularly in "*In Memoriam*," to restore to his countrymen the simpler and sweeter forms of the language. In that good work the Laureate and the Tribune have laboured side by side. Both are masters of a noble English style.

Posterity will be at a disadvantage in forming an estimate of Mr Bright's abilities, and of his influence on contemporary politics. He must be heard to be appreciated. As an actor he has no equal upon our stage. Tears and laughter struggle for mastery in his voice, wherein Nature and artifice fit close together, showing no mark of a join. He uses his head as the rudder of a ship, turning it now this way and now that, directing his course to the ever-given point of persuasion. His eyes and hands both speak; even his grey hair, tumbling backwards from his temples is eloquent.

Time, cruel and relentless, seldom spares the favourite of the hour; but Time, though greedy of his dues, has not pressed very heavily upon the great speaker. Seventy-three years have left their mark of fatigue upon him; that is all.

His massive forehead is only slightly wrinkled, his large face is pale and colourless, his large light eyes look out with enquiring pathos, and the once firm mouth has its corners drawn down.

Whim or ignorance leads the pictorial caricaturists into the error of representing Mr Bright as dressed in

Quaker costume, and with a single eye-glass in his eye. He dresses in an ordinarily-cut black frock coat and waistcoat, and dark tweed trousers. He wears a plain gold watch chain and carries a pair of double eye-glasses, used only for reading.

It is no secret that his mind is abnormally active, and that the powers of his intellect yield to the pressure of undue labour and excitement. In the very midst of his denunciations of the Russian war he was stricken down by illness, and at the close of that unprofitable struggle was forced for a time to retire from public life. A similar misfortune befel him a little more than twelve years ago. He had accepted the office of President of the Board of Trade, but was at length compelled to relinquish the active duties of the post. In 1873 he had so far recovered as to feel himself warranted in undertaking a position similar to that which he held under the present Administration, for the second time.

Mr Bright has been accused of inability to recognise a second side to any question; of intolerance of other people's views; of unmitigated hatred of Tories and Toryism; of perpetually reminding the world of his own exploits in the past, and of prophesying at large—all faults of a kind common to human greatness and thoroughness.

Had Mr Bright been wise and well advised he would never have taken office. He is a puller-down, not a setter-up: a critic, not a legislator, and his place is in opposition. In opposition all his life, he has opposed Protection, the Ten Hours Bill, the Government of India and of Ireland, the standing army, the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston, the ancient forms of electoral franchise, the South against the North in the American Civil War, and the latest policy in Egypt.

It is, however, a great mistake to vilify the motives of such a man as Mr Bright—a man manifestly actuated by the highest and noblest spirit of patriotism.

He sees, what all men see, that war is a cruel, a savage, and a deplorable custom, that to take simple rustics from the plough's tail, and ignorant mechanics from the workshop and the forge, to dress them up in gay clothes and send them forth to the sound of music and the waving of flags to murder the blameless citizens of another land, is horrible beyond the power of words to express. And possessed of a mental vision of limited range, combined with a merciful disposition and great powers of language, he seizes on the undeniable fact of the cruelty of war, and argues that, because war entails suffering, Englishmen should not, under provocation, go to war, or even support an efficient standing army.

You cannot persuade this eloquent Quaker of the fact, that if the presiding Genius of this narrow spot of earth, set amid stormy seas and grey weather, this mother of nations and of liberty, were to lay down her shield and put by her sword, fierce hordes of German butchers and Russian savages and French materialists would sail across the sea and become masters of our hearths and homes.

It was vouchsafed to us, first of all the modern world, to conquer liberty from a proud race of kings, and yet to remain loyal to the monarchical principle. Mr Bright, however, seems to think that liberty and monarchy will not travel along the road of Destiny to Time's ultimate goal, hand in hand.

It is impossible not to be struck by the force and beauty of Mr Bright's eloquence. When the whisper runs through the lobbies and the library that "Bright will be

up," members rush to their places, fill the floor, and crowd into the galleries. All are anxious to hear that stirring voice. He rises amid a universal stillness. At first he is somewhat tremulous, his tones falter a little as if with age and fatigue. But soon the sonorous sentences ring out loud and clear. His wit sparkles. His denunciations are full of prophetic fervour. His pathos, often personal to himself and tinged with the sadness of a good man's sorrow, always touches the heart.

SIR RICHARD CROSS.

The Right Honourable Richard Assheton Cross, M.P., P.C., LL.D., &c., &c., late Home Secretary under the Government of Lord Beaconsfield, sits among the leaders of the Conservative party in the House of Commons. First a lawyer and afterwards a statesman, his legal training has stood him in good stead as a Parliamentary debater. Like so many of his colleagues on the front Opposition bench, he has not of late often addressed the assembly. But when he does speak, he seizes upon the weak points of his adversary with the readiness and skill of a practised advocate. At the General Election of 1868 Mr Cross had the honour of winning the election for South-West Lancashire from Mr Gladstone, and on that occasion won oratorical triumphs greater than has fallen to his lot since. In 1852 he published a compilation of "The Acts relating to the Settlement and Removal of the Poor, with notices of cases, indices and forms." And in 1858, another legal work, entitled "The General and Quarter Sessions of the Peace: their Jurisdiction and Practice in other than Criminal Matters." In the latter volume he was assisted by Mr Leeming. His degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by the University of Cambridge—

where he graduated B.A. in 1846—two years after becoming a Bencher of the Inner Temple, to which distinction he was raised in 1876. To achieve so many and such exceptional successes in the arduous battle of public life a man must necessarily have displayed powers of mind out of the common. Mr Disraeli, as is well known, thought highly of his abilities. His figure is homely, and his shrewd face is set off with a large reddish beard. Sir Richard's manner of addressing the House is sharp and decisive. But it cannot be said that the author of the Draconian "Prisons' Regulations" fails from the defect of over graciousness, or that the matter of his orations is over-laden, much less concealed, with the lighter graces of rhetorical ornament.

MR FORSTER.

The face of the Right Honourable William Henry Forster, M.P., F.R.S., late Chief Secretary for Ireland, is certainly not an index to his mind. He looks unbending, even morose. It is as if he put on the grimace of what he would wish to appear. There is an air of faded ruggedness about his large and irregular features. His bridgeless nose is thick and round in the region of the nostrils, his cheeks are wide and full, and his anxious eyes are deep-set beneath a massive forward brow seamed with thought and half-covered with sparse patches of hair combed downward carelessly from right to left. He wears a ragged red and grey beard and a moustache—which gives the chief point of character to his face—cut close to the top of the upper lip, straight across from corner to corner of a wide mouth. Tall and somewhat fleshy, with large feet and hands, and long legs that hang loosely from the knee-joints, he walks with quick

uncertain strides, and sits with his body forward, towards the edge of the seat, his chin on his breast, his eyes cast down, and his hands clasped across the region below the bottom of his waistcoat.

For a man sixty-six years of age, Mr Forster displays extraordinary physical vigour. Indeed he seems indifferent to fatigue and impervious to its effects, unless an occasional nap when the member in possession of the floor is particularly prosy can be counted against him. While in office his manner of answering questions was short, to the point, and, in extreme cases, somewhat imperious. His ordinary voice, however, falls pleasantly upon the ear; and when roused to an effort of oratory, few men in the House are more impressive than the rough but accomplished Yorkshireman and worsted manufacturer.

With the exception of Mr Bright and Mr Gladstone, no man on his side of the House has done more important or more serious work in Parliament. He was Colonial Secretary under Lord Russell, and subsequently became Vice-President of the Council of Education, was made a Privy Councillor, and—let it never be forgotten—piloted the Education Act of 1870 and the Ballot Act of 1872. In the year 1875 he was elected Lord Rector of the University of Aberdeen, whence he derives his distinction of LL.D.

It has been said that Mr Forster was not a success as an Irish Chief Secretary. But we must remember all that he had to put up with in that position—how he was pommelled by Parnell, baited by Biggar, sneered at by Sexton, defied by Dillon, threatened by T. P. O'Connor, and bullied by the rest of the Irreconcilable Third Party. Future ages and the Muse of History will do him justice. When the Irish below the oppo-

site gangway lowered and glowered at him he stood firm, at least until he gave way,—until he melted beneath the softening influence of their blarney.

During the long, tedious, and soul-wearing stages of Mr Gladstone's Irish remedial legislation through the Commons, how often did I mentally liken him to a male Penelope in a linen waistcoat! The projects which he framed in Downing Street in the daytime he was forced to undo in Parliament at night. Compared with his Protean changes, the chameleon is a symbol of stability, and the weather-cock as immutable as Irish discontent itself.

"Her Majesty's Government," he was wont to say, "cannot agree to such and such a proposition of the Hon. Member for Cork," and five minutes later he would make an unconditional surrender. "Her Majesty's Government," he would go on to state, "have fixed the limit at which tenants in certain parts of Ireland shall be excused from paying rent for a time." When, however, the Irish, led by Mr Parnell, stormed and raved for further concessions, Mr Forster, like the lady in "Don Juan," "whispering 'he' would ne'er consent, consented." Hence there was joy in Hibernia and jigs in the lobby.

Does not the adage tell us that it is sad to see a good man battling with misfortune? No one who knows Mr Forster will dispute his goodness, his manliness, or his misfortunes. It is quite certain that if he could have pacified the Irish Home Rule party in the House of Commons he would have done so. It is quite certain that no English statesman has ever more thoroughly realised, or more readily admitted, the wrongs which have been inflicted on that land for centuries past. And we must never forget that Ireland has had wrongs,

that the landlords have not always behaved well to the tenants, that the people have been neglected and oppressed by the Imperial Government in times gone by.

But well-disposed as was Mr Forster to Ireland, he would not be a party to the so-called "Treaty of Kilmainham." He preferred parting from his colleagues, and now as a private member attacks the Government from a point of vantage immediately in rear of the Treasury Bench.

MR GIBSON.

During Mr Forster's tenure of office under the present Government, he was steadfastly and consistently opposed by one of the brightest ornaments of the Conservative party—the Right Honourable Edward Gibson, M.P., LL.D., Attorney-General for Ireland during Lord Beaconsfield's last Administration. Mr Gibson has a good appearance. He is of middle height, of a compact figure, with a keen healthy-looking Irish face, twinkling eyes, a well-cut mouth, and a profusion of silver hair as soft and shining as the breast of a duck—an old young man, full of life and vigour, and with a tongue as loose as the clapper of a bell. His voice is loud and resonant, his manner haughty, and his rhetorical style at once declamatory and persistent. He at least is not overawed by Mr Gladstone, and stands up to that splendid statesman with magnificent courage. Mr Gibson and Mr Plunkett, both admirable speakers, represent what the Parnellites contemptuously describe as the "garri-son" in Ireland. Step by step, stage by stage, clause by clause, Mr Gibson has fought every one of the Irish Bills introduced by Ministers during the present Parliament, and in that regard has led the Opposition, the titular leadership of Sir Stafford Northcote notwith-

standing. This expert swordsman of politics, almost alone, saves his party from the reproach of insipidity.

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

Sir William George Granville Venables Vernon-Harcourt, M.P., Q.C., Home Secretary, now in the fifty-eighth year of his age, is personally a man of lofty stature and noble presence; and only a very impudent querist seeing him stride about the lobbies and corridors of the House of Commons would venture to inquire of one, whose every movement betokens importance, whether he "was anybody in particular?"

When it is asked, whether this son of a dean and grandson of an archbishop would support the Radicals to disestablish and disendow the English Church, it must not be forgotten that he assisted Mr Gladstone to make short work of the Irish Establishment.

Such a forcible nature is sure to be more or less destructive, and it seems natural that Sir William should approve of the birching of juvenile offenders. It must not, however, be supposed that his disposition is cruel, or that he is unmindful of the prerogative of mercy which belongs to his high office. No Home Secretary was ever more willing to inquire into and remedy miscarriages of justice. The afflicted and unfortunate find in the proud Minister a shield and buckler, and his colleagues a charming and courteous companion.

Oil to his friends, he is vinegar to his enemies. His manner when addressing the Opposition is at once overbearing and irritating. He has the faults of the professor used to dogmatise before a class of college "men," and of the advocate who may have cultivated the not very difficult art of frightening timid witnesses.

Sometimes when he is on his legs hectoring at the

Tories, and arousing the easily-aroused pride of clever Conservatives like Mr Chaplin, his chief, Mr Gladstone, with a worn look in his eager, tired eyes, looks up at him, sideways and sorrowfully, as much as to say, "My right hon. friend the Home Secretary is exercising his dominant temper at the expense of the courtesies of debate."

Of course Mr Gladstone would never think of alluding to Sir William Harcourt as "the right hon. baronet," though, strange to say, that is a mistake commonly made on both sides of the House. The more intelligent reader will, however, be aware that Mr Vernon-Harcourt was knighted on the occasion of his acceptance of the office of Solicitor-General, under Mr Gladstone, in November 1873, which office he retained for about three months.

"HISTORICUS" of the *Times*, journalist, satirist, scholar, and politician, firmly believes that he has Royal blood in his veins. And, indeed, it may be as he says. Princely blood when submitted to chemical analysis does not materially differ, say from the blood of a parson; and his father occupied the eminently respectable position of a dean in the Church Establishment. The right hon. gentleman is, however, possessed of that which crowns do not always cover; need I remark—brains.

Above all things he is an intellectual athlete. The scholar of Trinity, who won high honours at Cambridge University, and was returned to Parliament for the University of Oxford, loves the struggle between mind and mind as an Irishman glories in shillelagh practice—for its own sake.

He has charged himself with making epigrams, but may stand excused in that direction, inasmuch as his epigrams are not of a quality to call for remark.

Not epigram but invective is his strong point. That, however, in a Sir William Harcourt is called invective, which in a less exalted personage would pass for downright abuse. In his younger days he was one of the most caustic contributors to the *Saturday Review*.

Meanwhile the slater of the press has become the slasher of Parliament; and the sometime critic of the *Saturday* is now as ready to cut up the Conservative party as of old he was willing to flatten out an aspiring poetaster, or damn a sucking politician with faint praise.

Let it be said in his favour that few rancorous speakers or writers have less real venom in their sting. He loves the glitter and ardour of debate. But the thrust once driven home, probably no man would more willingly heal the wound which himself had made.

Some statesmen pretend that their highest efforts of oratory come warm from the mint of the brain and fresh from the tip of the tongue. In that direction, at least, the Home Secretary is not pretentious. He elaborates his exordium and prepares his peroration, in private; and lest the newspapers should report his studied utterances carelessly, he is not above supplying the gentlemen of the press with digests of his speeches of separate lengths suited to their several requirements.

Indeed, with Sir William Harcourt, statesmanship, though not degraded to the level of a trade, is yet the business of his life. To hear him thundering at the country squires because they do not preserve game solely for the amusement of the lads of the village, you might suppose him the poacher's guide, philosopher, and friend. The poacher must not, however, be led away by the fervour of the party politician to brain a gamekeeper, or he may find, to his cost, that the Home Secretary, with the power, though not with the will, to

grant a reprieve from the gallows, is a very different gentleman from the fierce father of the Ground Game Act.

In shaking his forefinger in the faces of the Tory party, and threatening them with instant annihilation, Sir William is excelled by no Minister on the Treasury Bench, nor, indeed, by any man on that side of the House, Mr Bright excepted.

Unlike Mr Bright, however, the anger of "Historicus" is of the tongue, not of the heart. He would not—for Shylock's "wilderness of monkeys"—pull down the aristocracy, or part with that drop of Royal blood which he supposes to be somewhere secreted in his system. But he would pull down the Lord Mayor and break up the Corporation of the City of London—if he could!

MR HENRY CHAPLIN.

Mr Henry Chaplin, Conservative M.P. for Mid-Lincolnshire, is forty-four years of age, but looks older. Tall and robust of frame and dressed with careless elegance, he would command attention in any assembly as a pattern high-class Englishman. With fair curling hair, somewhat thin on the crown of the head, and fair whiskers, blue eyes, and a well-formed aquiline nose and full, forward chin, Mr Chaplin only needs a large firm mouth to make his head a type of intellectual power. The son of a clergyman,—of a sound English stock,—he is Tory to the backbone. A man of wealth and position—he inherited the fine estate of his uncle, the late Charles Chaplin, of Blankney Hall, Lincolnshire.

His talents might place him on the front bench of the Lower Chamber along with the leaders of his party, but he is wanting in Parliamentary suppleness. A

brilliant and ready debater, as capable of a quick retort as of a set speech full and flowing—of a speech armed with point, argument, epigram, and antithesis, and bristling with invective. Yet he sometimes fails in debate, because he flies too high, and cannot always keep his temper well in hand.

He would seem to hate Mr Gladstone and all his ways with a hatred intense and unforgiving. Indeed, the two men are "wide as the poles asunder." Mr Gladstone is all for change, and would—it may be assumed—rather go back than stand still, while Mr Chaplin sticks firmly to the past with all its faults and flaws.

Considering his sanguine temperament and his unbridled courage, it is scarcely surprising that, whenever opportunity offers, and sometimes at the wrong moment, he should attack the lion of Liberalism. He cannot, or will not, spare Mr Gladstone's grey hairs and great talents.

He has assailed the foreign policy of the present leader of Her Majesty's Government, with vigour and considerable ability. It happens, however, that warmed with the heat of debate he sometimes loses a hold of facts and details, and, mixing up pitiless scorn with weak argument, lays bare his statements to the trenchant blade of his unsparing adversary.

What follows is matter of political notoriety. Mr Gladstone—the older sworder—who thinks as he fights, waits an opportunity and comes down with his swashing blow. It is not safe for Mr Chaplin to beard the lion in his den, the Gladstone in his place. In an instant the more formidable duellist conquers his assailant. In dealing with smaller men on the other side, Mr Chaplin is, however, often successful. He is always a telling

speaker; and, if he would but consent to act the part of a cavalry outpost in Parliamentary warfare, his services would prove invaluable to the cause he has at heart.

Mr Chaplin delights in sport for its own sake. He does not seem to care much for that "feeble folk" the conies, but, in his eyes, the hare is sacred to the aristocracy. Probably never before was he so busy in Parliament as during the passage through the Commons of the Ground Game Bill. On the first, second, and third readings he was in his place eager to speak and anxious to vote. When the Bill reached the Committee stage there was Mr Chaplin ready with his rhetoric, making half a dozen elaborate speeches in the space of a single afternoon, prepared to do, if not to die, in defence of the divine right of the landlord to the exclusive shooting of the ground game.

SIR CHARLES DILKE.

No sketch of the "Men of Light and Leading" who sit in the House of Commons would pass muster if it omitted the name of the Right Hon. Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, late Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and now President of the Local Government Board. Sir Charles was at one time an avowed Republican, and is to this day a Radical, of scarcely less advanced views than Mr Joseph Chamberlain. He is forty-one years old, above the middle height, and of a well-set frame. His face, covered with dark moustache and beard, wears a grave expression, and his ample forehead betokens large powers of mind. He is rather a ready, correct, and elegant speaker, than a great orator. Friends and foes are alike agreed that Sir Charles Dilke is a first-rate parliamentarian.

Both in opposition and upon the Treasury Bench he has shown a thorough acquaintance with foreign and colonial affairs. A Minister ever ready to answer the questions of the other side, in so far as he deems it prudent to gratify their curiosity. He is equally courteous and no less cautious in dealing with the policy of the department over which at present he presides. Neither his set speeches nor his occasional efforts betray much of that vein of sarcasm manifest in the pages of "*The Fall of Prince Florestan of Monaco*," a satire which, published anonymously, for several months baffled all attempts to discover the secret of its authorship. The country is indebted to Sir Charles Dilke for the machinery of the School Board, the franchise for women in municipal elections, the abolition of the law relating to drawing and quartering at the execution of felons, the extension of the hours of polling at parliamentary elections within the metropolitan area, the present condition of our commercial relations abroad, particularly with France, and other useful measures.

As a writer of books of travel and satire, as editor and proprietor of numerous periodicals, as a fiery debater in opposition, and a cool, cautious, self-restrained Minister of State, Sir Charles Dilke has raised himself to a position of eminence which will probably tend to yet greater advancement hereafter.

CHAPTER III.

INSTALLATION OF A SPEAKER— SWEARING IN MEMBERS.

THE picturesque part of the ceremony of opening Parliament is performed in the Lords, what occurs in the Commons being, by comparison, tame and colourless. Directly the door of the People's House is unlocked at noon, Members throng in and pass the time with friendly greetings and cheerful conversation. There is a slight difference between the ceremonial observed at the meeting immediately after a General Election, and that which takes place on the first day of an ordinary session, the former involving extra attractions, consisting of the appointment of a Speaker, and swearing in the members of the new House. The ceremony of the installation of the new Speaker, Mr Arthur Peel, must be fresh in the public memory. It is better, therefore, that I should here narrate what took place on the 30th of April 1880, when Mr Gladstone returned victorious from the campaign of Mid-Lothian to take possession of the Treasury Bench.

Sir Erskine May, Clerk of the House, and his wigged and gowned assistants, having taken their seats at the table, the Speaker's chair being empty and the House as yet innocent of the mace, and while members still crowd the floor, three distinct knocks are heard sounding on the door. Then those members nearest the entrance stand aside, making a narrow lane up the

centre of the chamber, the portals are flung asunder, and amid a sudden silence, Sir William Knollys, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, attired in Court costume, wearing the Collar of the Bath, wand and cocked hat in hand, comes slowly along. As Black Rod proceeds toward Sir Erskine May, the lane of members closes behind him, apparently cutting off his retreat. The practised courtier, though in a somewhat uncomfortable predicament, is equal to the emergency, and bowing first towards the empty Chair, and then right and left, says, "The Lords, authorised by the Royal Commission, desire the immediate attendance of this Honourable House to the House of Lords to hear the Royal Commission read." It was generally observed at the time that Sir William Knollys laid stress on the word "desire," the late Sir G. Bowyer having on a former occasion taken exception to the expression "require," as used by Black Rod when addressing the House. The bearer of the message, however, in spite of his coolness, again finds himself in a dilemma. The lane of members which had closed behind him for the second time once more gives way, but not sufficiently to admit of his walking backwards with the necessary grace and dignity. Finding, then, that it is impossible to retire with his face to the Chair in a manner satisfactory to himself, or to those in the rear, Sir William goes sideways out of the chamber amid the congratulatory smiles of an approving senate.

Then Sir Thomas Acland, speaking from the second row of the Ministerial side and the third seat above the gangway, proposes the Right Hon. Henry Brand for Speaker of the House of Commons for the third time, and the motion is seconded by Sir Philip Egerton. Both speeches are received with tokens of warm approval,

every mention of the candidate's name being acclaimed with a burst of cheering. Mr Brand, as yet unarrayed either in wig or robe, returns thanks in measured and dignified terms, and is followed by Mr O'Donnell on behalf of a "third party" in the House, which desires to express its approval of his impartial conduct. Could the Member for Dungarvan have foreseen the Speaker's *coup d'état*, nine months later, he would, as he himself is at pains to explain, have remained silent. The mover and seconder of the Speaker elect then lead their charge up to the Chair, and the Right Honourable Gentleman, mounting the steps, thanks the House for their confidence, and takes his seat, just as the Serjeant-at-Arms, ready in the nick of time, marches up with the mace, and lays it upon its rests at the end of the table. Next the "untimely slain," the amiable, promising Lord Frederick Cavendish, on behalf of the new Government, and Sir Stafford Northcote, on behalf of the new Opposition, congratulate the Speaker on his election, and the House, having adjourned until the next day, the Serjeant-at-Arms once more comes forth, and carries away the mace.

The swearing in of members of the present House of Commons began after much preparation, and with a measured and stately dignity, which, growing gradually less and less ceremonious, was at last conducted with the easy familiarity of a solicitor's clerk administering an affidavit. Not that special fault need be found with what must prove the almost invariable course of every prolonged ceremonial function, from a coronation to a wedding breakfast. The science of heraldry and the book of etiquette to the contrary, human nature, noble as well as simple, abhors deportment, and the monarch is not less glad to doff his crown for the head covering

of private life than the officers of Her Majesty's army and navy to change their uniform for mufti. It was something, indeed, for the chosen of the people who usually avoid every sign of ostentation to keep up the appearance of ceremony until Mr Speaker was fairly installed ; but that necessary business accomplished, it was natural that they should revert to the simple manners of common men.

And now all is ready. Upon the table rest nine volumes not ordinarily to be observed in that situation. One is a folio tome, the others octavo in size, and all are splendidly bound in purple morocco, with elaborate borders tooled in gold, and with gilt edges. The larger book, with the arms of the House of Commons stamped in the centre of the cover, is the roll of Parliament ; the smaller ones copies of the Testament on which to swear all members, unless legally qualified to make an affirmation, equally binding according to law. Every one of the eight copies of the Scripture rests upon a card-board tablet, printed and varnished, having a narrow edging of blue, and inscribed with a form of words whereby members of Parliament, not being Quakers or other excepted persons, on their entrance to the duties of legislation make oath and say : "I do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, according to law, So help me God !"

From half-past one until two o'clock a large number of members continue to pour into the House, and take their seats in preparation for the approaching solemnity. Meanwhile the door under the clock, leading into the lobby, is left wide open, not shut as is the ordinary custom when a message is expected from the Upper Chamber. Precisely at two minutes to two the voice of

an Usher is heard calling out "Speaker," and the members not already seated hasten to their places as the Serjeant-at-Arms bears in the mace, followed by Mr Brand, dressed, to-day, in a black Court suit, with shining shoes and buckles, and wearing the historic bob-wig. It is remarked from all sides that Mr Speaker looks well and handsome, every inch the presiding officer of this great Assembly, as he walks, with an upright carriage and firm, elastic step, to take his seat in the presidential chair.

Now there is a lull before business begins. The Liberal side of the House is comparatively full, all except the front Ministerial bench. The position newly taken up by the extreme wing of the Home Rule section is also worthy of remark. These gentlemen now sit on the Conservative side, below the gangway, as if determined to be always in opposition. Scarcely have ten minutes elapsed since Mr Speaker took his seat, when Black Rod is announced, and amid cries of "Hats off!" Sir William Knollys once more comes in with slow steps, through the open door, and half-way up the House, then pauses, and desires, in the name of the Commissioners, the presence of the Commons in another place. Having delivered himself of his message in a clear voice, Black Rod steps back four paces, bows to the Chair, steps back a further four paces, and bows again, and so on, with four paces and a bow, until his sable wand and white cock's feathers are lost to view beneath "the Gothic archway in the wall."

Then Mr Brand rises, and the ever-ready Serjeant-at-Arms seizes upon the mace, and, followed by a rush of members, precedes the Speaker to the Lords. As the cloud of Commoners are seen to pass to the far end of the lobby a number of attendants come within the

field of vision, bearing four long narrow oak tables, with leather-covered tops, which they bring into the Chamber, and place in a line with its length, in continuation of the table proper, leaving space to pass between the fixed and temporary tables, and a gangway straight up the centre of the House. Upon the four tables rest thirty-two Testaments, and a like number of tablets inscribed with the form of oath. Like their fellows at the upper table, these copies of the Scripture are also bound in purple morocco leather, gilt edged, but for some inexplicable reason their jackets are not so handsome ; they lack the tooled borders of their richer companions. When the tables have been duly laid out, members flock from their seats, and handle the sacred volumes with unsuppressed curiosity and apparent delight. While, however, they are thus innocently engaged the Speaker returns with the Serjeant-at-Arms. The former comes along the front Ministerial bench to his place, whence he bows to the House before seating himself, and the latter carries the indispensable "bauble" up the central gangway to its place of honour.

Thereupon Mr Speaker reads his commission, and offers his acknowledgments to the House for the honour done him, declares that the time has arrived when the Commons must take the oath, and himself sets the example by performing that duty and signing the roll of Parliament.

Now Sir Erskine May once more upstanding reads the names of members in rotation alphabetically, according to counties, and boroughs within counties, until thirty-two names have been called and answered to by so many of their possessors as are present, and these line the four sides of the two tables, every man with a Testament in his hand. Sir Erskine May having recited the oath,

each one of the members kisses his book, and comes up in rotation to the Ministerial side of the table to subscribe the roll of Parliament and be formally introduced to the Speaker, and thence files out at the back of the chair. Batches of thirty-two after thirty-two are sworn in this slow and solemn manner, until the proceeding, in spite of its dignified gravity, becomes wearisome and monotonous. As time progresses, Sir Erskine May, assisted by an attendant clerk, swears in the members in larger and smaller numbers, until at length—every one present being tired of a function too long protracted—the swearing-in is undertaken in a regular straightforward, business-like, even hurried manner.

Mr Bradlaugh was present during part of the proceedings, but, after a lengthened and earnest private conference with the Speaker, went away.

Previously to the next sitting it was whispered abroad that Mr Bradlaugh would address the House on the subject of the affirmation which he claimed to make in place of that allowed to Nonconformists, as specified by Act of Parliament, and this rumour drew a large attendance. On the arrival of Mr Speaker, nearly a hundred members were present. Sir Stafford Northcote, Sir Richard Cross, and Sir Hardinge Giffard occupied the front-bench on the Opposition side, and immediately opposite to them, across the floor, on the very threshold of the Chamber, stood Mr Bradlaugh himself, hat in hand. I remember it seemed to me at the time as if the chaplain read the short form of prayer with more than his usual impressiveness, and hon. members likewise displayed a seriousness of attention emphasised by the circumstances of the occasion. Meanwhile Mr Bradlaugh stands facing the House while other Members are upon their knees, an apparently uninterested specta-

tor of a time-honoured proceeding. Prayers over, a batch of members proceed to the tables to be sworn, but just then Black Rod appears and intimates to the House that the Lords, authorised by her Majesty's Commission, desire their immediate presence in the House of Peers on the subject of the adjournment of the House for the purpose of the re-election of Ministers, though not before Mr Bradlaugh, who has taken a seat within the Chamber, but without the bar, close to where he had been standing, comes forward with slow steps, carrying an open paper in his hand, as far as the corner of the table, opposite the front Ministerial bench.

On the return of Mr Speaker from the Upper Chamber, and his intimation to the House of the purport of the summons, Sir Erskine May, with whom Mr Bradlaugh had been in close conversation, informs the President that the Hon. Member for Northampton claims to make affirmation or declaration instead of taking the oath; whereupon Mr Speaker announces his willingness to hear anything which the hon. member may have to say, strictly to the point. Upon this the House is all attention. Members anxious not to lose a word improvise mechanical ear-trumpets with the palms of their hands. It is manifest that Mr Bradlaugh's moment has arrived, as he stands in the place ordinarily occupied by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, close to the despatch box, pale of countenance, facing the Speaker, with his right hand extended and pressed down upon the table in front of him. He begins in a low tone scarcely audible, but, in answer to cries of "Speak up," raises his voice, and in clear accents of practised oratory, and words deliberately chosen, makes his demand. He expresses his willingness to affirm, as in years past he had done "in the highest courts of jurisdiction in this

realm;" and at the conclusion of his short address, when requested by the Speaker to withdraw, quickly disappears. Mr Bradlaugh having retired, the Speaker formally acquaints the House of what has transpired. "I have," he says, "not considered myself justified in determining this claim myself, having grave doubts in the construction of the Acts above stated, but desire to refer the matter to the judgment of the House."

A Committee was then agreed to inquire into the matter of the Bradlaugh scandal, concerning which much remains to be said hereafter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRADLAUGH SCANDAL.

PART I.—1880.

IT is said not only that Mr Charles Bradlaugh denies the existence of a Supreme Being, but that he is also an aggressive Atheist; and a report so damaging, coupled with his well-known views on Population, has created a powerful prejudice against him. Under any circumstances, every possible fair attempt would have been made within the House to keep such a person from taking the seat to which he might be entitled by the will of the electors; but this gentleman's obstinate wrong-headedness and want of tact still further aggravated his opponents, and imported the element of personal antagonism into the unavoidable conflict.

But for the exercise of a desperate and dogged determination he would not have gained his point and been allowed to affirm two months after his return. It is a fact, however discouraging, that this individual, by force of character, conquered the House of Commons. They were forced to yield, to eat their words, to stultify themselves, and admit him whom they had contumeliously rejected. In dread lest the dignity of their Chamber should constantly be outraged, they suffered themselves to be defied and set at naught. They were, for the time being, put down by clamour.

Having been admitted on sufferance, it was hoped

and believed in many quarters that he would incur further contempt. That did not happen. By the preservation of a becoming, though not unvarying silence as a member of the House, he disappointed even his most active and bitter enemies. And when he did join in the debates, it was remarked that his reputation for oratory had not been exaggerated. His voice, if not uniformly melodious, is always resonant, his enunciation distinct, and his matter pithy and to the purpose. Indeed, from the hour when, inspired with the courage of despair, he bearded the Speaker, shook off the grasp of the Serjeant-at-Arms, and defied the assembled wisdom and power of Parliament to deprive him of what he may well have deemed his legal right—until forced to bow to the decision of the Courts of Law and the resolution of the majority—he behaved himself with unvarying propriety.

During the first stage of the struggle when his claim to sit in the House was in abeyance, he habitually took a seat within the Chamber, just outside the precincts of debate. A man less callous to criticism might so have conducted himself once, twice, or thrice to assert a principle, but Mr Bradlaugh appeared to have no notion that his demand to enter the doors, once tacitly allowed, further visits would show like an intrusion in the eyes of men used to the amenities of polite society. At times, when his case came on for discussion, and he was sent outside by the Speaker, it was not his habit to withdraw from the palace altogether, or even to retire into the library. He preferred rather to hang about the very portal of the Chamber—an obstruction in the way of members coming in and going out—and to stand with his blanched face pressed against the glass of the doors, peering in at the proceedings in which he was not suffered to take part.

The common idea that Mr Bradlaugh is of a stalwart and soldierly port is not altogether accurate. He is a bulky man, tall, and thick about the shoulders. He stoops. His knees bend inward as he walks quickly along. When seen with his long arms and heavy hands drooping or swinging by his sides, there is nothing dignified about him. His head is best studied in repose. The forehead, in the region immediately above the eyes, is well developed, but narrows upwards to a great height, pyramidal in shape, and set off, not ornamented, with prominent ears and scant light hair, bald at the temples and on the crown, but growing long behind and straggling over the coat-collar. The cold eyes glisten with the hardness of polished steel. The straight thick nose, with heavily-winged nostrils, is short, and altogether as much too small for the face as the upper lip, thrust forward above a close-shut, angular, naked mouth, is too large. The hairless cheeks are spacious and flat, and the bare jaw and chin powerful in the extreme. When passive, the mask indicates force, scrutiny, and aggressiveness. When he smiles, the expression of his face is not altogether unamiable.

The first Select Committee appointed by the House to consider the validity of Mr Bradlaugh's claim to make affirmation instead of taking the oath, reported that he did not come within the category of those who were legally entitled to affirm. Determined not to be beaten, and apparently unable to realise the impropriety of the proceeding, he marched up to the table and demanded to be sworn; but just as the Clerk had laid hold on the Testament, with the object of handing it to him, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff hastily interposed, and the Speaker desired the Member for Northampton to withdraw. Bowing with a short,

stiff inclination of the head, in the direction of the chair, he stepped back a couple of paces, and turning hastily round, made the best of his way outside. No cheer greeted or encouraged him to be of good hope—only a chilling silence prevailed. An angry debate, lasting over three sittings, and involving several divisions of a party character, followed, and in the end a second Select Committee was appointed to consider the report of the former conference, and generally to enquire into the right and jurisdiction of the House to refuse to allow the form of oath to be administered to him, “together with their opinion thereon.”

After taking the matter into consideration, that Committee declared that in their view Mr Bradlaugh should not be suffered to take the oath, but that he should be allowed the opportunity of having his statutory rights determined beyond doubt, by being encouraged to take the only step by which the legality of his making an affirmation could be brought for decision before the High Court of Justice. The report went on to say that the House, by the exercise of its power, could doubtless prevent Mr Bradlaugh from obtaining such judicial decision. The Select Committee, however, deprecated a course of that kind, and recommended that should “Mr Bradlaugh again seek to make and subscribe the affirmation, he be not prevented from doing so.”

Here, then, were two Select Committees, chosen from among members of the House, making two separate and distinct reports—one within little more than a fortnight of the other—reports advising exactly contrary courses. The first said he could not be admitted to affirm, the second that he should not be prevented from affirming. However reasonable may be the prejudice against this reputed Atheist, the facts of the case, almost

inviting him to a trial of strength with an assembly uncertain of its own mind, must be recorded with fairness and impartiality.

Five days after the report of the second Select Committee was in the hands of members, that is to say, on June 21, 1880, Mr Labouchere again brought the matter up, and moved "That Mr Bradlaugh, Member for the Borough of Northampton, be admitted to make an affirmation or declaration instead of the oath required by law." To that substantive motion, Sir Hardinge Giffard proposed as an amendment: "That, having regard to the reports and proceedings of two Select Committees appointed by this House, Mr Bradlaugh be not permitted to take the oath, or make the affirmation mentioned in the statute 29 Vic. c. 19, and the 31 and 32 Vic. c. 72." The motion was discussed for two days, and the amendment was agreed to by a majority of 45, in a House of 505 members.

As early as four o'clock on the first day, Mr Bradlaugh had taken his accustomed seat under the peers' gallery in the House of Commons, where presently the two members for Northampton joined in whispered conference. Meanwhile the House filled, and very soon there was not a vacant seat anywhere. Mere idle laughter greeted the presentation of a petition for the disfranchisement of the borough of which Mr Bradlaugh claimed to be junior member. On the other hand, a petition entrusted to Mr Newdegate, praying that infidels might not be suffered to legislate for "this Christian country," induced a short, sharp rattling fire of approval.

At a quarter to six o'clock Mr Bradlaugh went to the door under the gallery, where, for a few moments, he stood, colourless of countenance, his face directed towards Sir Rainald Knightley, while that hon. gentle-

man explained to the House the nature of a petition which he held in his hand against allowing an infidel to be an M.P. As he went out into the lobby, and while the cheers which followed Sir Rainald Knightley's words must still have sounded in his ears, Mr Labouchere rose from below the gangway on the Ministerial side, to present a petition from "some thousands" of electors of the borough of Northampton in favour of his colleague's claim. That petition having been duly received, and balanced by another of 3581 signatures on the other side, the senior member for Northampton proceeded to speak to his motion. At the conclusion of the speech, which lasted three quarters of an hour, about half the members present quitted the Chamber. Mr C. M'Laren seconded the motion. The exchange of civilities between Alderman Fowler,—Sir H. Giffard's seconder,—and Mr Warton, and the earlier and friendly conference between persons so apparently dissimilar as the Rev. Isaac Nelson and Mr Hugh O'Donnell, predicated that the dulness of the earlier hours would not continue until the end of the debate.

It happened that Mr O'Donnell was the last speaker, half an hour after midnight, while the House had yet to listen to the perfervid periods of Mr Nelson. Sir Hardinge Giffard's invitation, made some hours previously, to Ministers to fall into the "trap" of declaring in favour of Mr Bradlaugh's claim, gained for him a Conservative cheer, and from the Prime Minister a long and steady glance which was not a look either of admiration or of gratitude. Alderman Fowler denounced the heterodoxy of Mr Bradlaugh, and seconded the amendment of Sir Hardinge Giffard. Mr Serjeant Simon retorted on the City magnate, the present Lord Mayor, and included in his assault Baron Henry de

Worms, who had ventured a short, angry exclamation of dissent from the hon. Member for Dewsbury. Quick as lightning the Baron drew his note-book from his pocket. The sequel was yet to come. Mr Warton would not lag behind his friend the Alderman, and during the dinner hour, in a House of about forty members, prayed and hoped that the Government would pause before "throwing their shield over the infidel and the blasphemer." Of three speakers, Mr Whitbread, the late General Burnaby, and Mr Hinde Palmer, the officer of the Guards was altogether most emphatic. General Burnaby's objection to Mr Bradlaugh seemed, indeed, personal even more than Parliamentary; and having fulminated against "Atheism," the General marched down the centre of the floor and into the lobby with the air of Colonel Newcome, when that hero, with his uplifted cane, stalked out of the "Cave of Harmony."

In contrast with the gentle anger of Mr Hubbard and the legal arguments of the late Sir Henry Jackson, some relief was found in the characteristic address of Mr Beresford-Hope, bristling with literary points and with ingenious objections against the claim of one whom he declared to be as unqualified to affirm as to swear, by his speeches and by his silence, by his letters to the newspapers, and by his arrogance generally. Indeed, according to Mr Beresford-Hope, Mr Bradlaugh was to be kept out, legally if possible, but he was to be kept out. That Mr Bright and the Attorney-General intended to speak, appeared from the evidence of their many memoranda and their constant exchange of ideas, and so in the end it proved. Mr Newdegate rose with four others, from among whom Mr Hopwood was chosen. The Member for Stockport argued that the logical con-

clusion of objecting to Mr Bradlaugh taking the oath would be that the condition of every man's mind might henceforth be subject to an irresponsible inquisition, Mr Serjeant Simon meanwhile had gone out, it may be, forgetful of his attack upon Baron Henry de Worms. But the Baron had not forgotten it. Armed with a glass of water and a plentiful supply of notes, he waited on the lips of Mr Hopwood, not so much to study the sense or admire the mellifluous accents of that hon. member, as to watch for the moment of his peroration and follow in his track. The voice of Mr Hopwood rose and fell, and trembled with emotion, and ceased. Then Baron Henry de Worms sprang to his feet, not knowing that there were behind him at least five others more active than himself, of whom Mr Arthur O'Connor had caught the Speaker's eye.

Later the Assembly listened to the Attorney-General's history of the Parliamentary oath from its origin downward to that very night, and to his contention that, inasmuch as Mr Bradlaugh would be allowed to affirm at common law, he should also be allowed to affirm in the House of Commons. Not less tolerantly, but far less attentively, did hon. members attend to the arguments of Mr Grantham on the other side; and, while he was mildly thundering against the Bradlaugh claim, a certain amount of conversation gently proceeded.

The air, by this time, was heated and languid, and it was necessary that an acknowledged great man should rise to save the debate from assuming a character of weariness. Soon afterwards the word went forth that Mr Bright had risen, following Mr Walpole, and in the course of a few minutes both floor and galleries were as full as they had been seven hours and a half earlier.

When Mr Bright averred that the oath would be binding upon the conscience and the honour of Mr Bradlaugh, the Opposition laughed at the notion of the honour of the junior Member for Northampton, and sneered at his conscience; but the great orator met and turned their sneers with consummate tact and skill. He was frequently interrupted, but never overcome; and now and again touches almost of scorn for the opinions of certain of his opponents, while lashing them into fury, insured their attention. There could be no doubt which side Mr Bright had taken. He was distinctly in favour of allowing Mr Bradlaugh to affirm. The speech was not a long one, but it evidently produced a profound effect upon the assembly, and assuredly gained many waverers for the Government. The Tribune of the People attacked the enemy with great resolution, and, right or wrong, proved a tower of strength to his party. When with hushed voice he spoke of the doubts which from time to time had beset his own soul, many a member must have recalled the Laureate's lines in "In Memoriam" concerning that friend of the poet, "at last" who "beat his music out." His appeal to those behind him, fresh from the constituencies, to support his view of the case, was received with cheers and counter-cheers, and when he sat down and Mr E. Stanhope rose to reply at the corner of the table on the Opposition side, it was amid cries of "Divide!" "Divide!"

Mr Stanhope, who objected to Mr Bradlaugh "in the name of our common Christianity," was loudly applauded by his friends; and it was only too painfully evident that circumstances and the exigencies of party had drawn a line of demarcation down the centre of the floor, making it appear that the Opposition were

defenders of the faith and the honourable gentlemen on the Liberal side the apologists of Atheism. The debate was adjourned on the motion of Mr Newdegate.

Mr Bradlaugh was again early in attendance next day, sitting below the bar, looking apparently well contented with his position and prospects. The presentation of a petition by Sir Eardley Wilmot, from Weston-super-Mare, praying the House not to admit persons who refused to recognise the existence of a Supreme Being, was witnessed by the individual most concerned with real or assumed indifference. When Mr Newdegate began, by expressing his opinion that Parliament had got into a "disgraceful muddle" over the entire business, the hero of the occasion quitted the Chamber, which at that time was not by any means so full as it became later on. Towards the conclusion of the lengthy speech, the Liberals grew impatient; but Mr Newdegate was fully equal to their interruptions, and whenever he was recalled to the question, managed, instead of complying, to return to the discussion of Atheism in the abstract. Even the long-suffering Speaker told him at last that it was difficult to reconcile his speech with the subject under discussion, whereupon the hon. member became more consequent, and shortly after yielded the floor to Mr Gladstone. The Prime Minister's reference to the powerful address delivered on the previous evening by his right hon. friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr Bright), evoked a long, low groan from the Opposition, which was met by a counter-demonstration of the Liberals. While endeavouring to show the wisdom of compromising the matter and suffering Mr Bradlaugh to come to the table and affirm, Mr Gladstone struggled to keep the promise he made to

himself as much as possible to avoid the introduction of "feeling," which he nevertheless described as "the minister of reason, so useful in a popular assembly." His lengthy illustration of the case of John Wilkes and the victory gained in times past by that person over Parliament, produced a distinct impression on the Liberals. When, however, he recalled a request made on the night before, that, in the event of Mr Bradlaugh being allowed to take his seat, the Speaker would intimate the fact to certain hon. members, in order that they might quit the Chamber, and so avoid the sight of such a degradation, the deep cheer which rose from the Opposition proved that the suggestion met with their entire approval.

The Prime Minister having boldly and decidedly espoused the Parliamentary fortunes of Mr Bradlaugh, the House might as well have divided there and then. Nevertheless, when Mr Gladstone resumed his seat, Mr Gibson took up the cudgels on behalf of the Opposition.

Many members now retired, but those who remained made up in enthusiasm what they lacked in numbers. Mr Gibson's unqualified condemnation of Mr Bright's speech pleased the Conservatives beyond measure, while at the same time the Liberals repeated their previous demonstration in its favour. The physical volume of Mr Gibson's voice, the confidence of his manner, and, above all, the precision of his reasoning, gave new courage to those behind him, and helped materially to win the battle. Mr Gladstone and Mr Bright sat side by side. They had said their say. What new champion had they to put forward against their energetic and unexhausted opponents? Mr William Fowler spoke next from a seat behind the

Treasury Bench. It happened, however, that only two members of the Administration were present to hear Mr Fowler, an ardent Liberal, differ from his own side. The dull hour was principally occupied by Sir Henry Tyler and Mr Mellor, the first of whom opposed, and the second supported the Government. Sir Henry Tyler obtained a laugh from the score or so of members present, by declaring there was some consolation in the reflection that, should the junior Member for Northampton gain his point, and enter the House as a full member, he would at least not be accompanied by Mrs Annie Besant. Early in the evening it was believed that a division would take place before nine o'clock ; but, as time wore on, the idea gained ground either that the debate might be carried over another sitting, or that the division would not be taken until after midnight.

If Mr Bright be sensitive to adverse criticism he did well to absent himself from his place during the speeches of Messrs Rodwell, Arthur Moore, Heneage, and Forester. Three of the four named opposed the Government and abused Mr Bright. Mr Arthur Moore, however, said that to let in Mr Bradlaugh would be to "exalt Atheism and dignify unbelief." And Mr A. M. Sullivan declared that he would not assist "to sweep God from the contemplation of members."

Mr Synan grew so eloquent for the Opposition, that his ordinarily ringing voice fell lower and lower, became hoarser and hoarser in tone, and he probably might have lapsed into unwilling silence but for the presence of mind of an hon. member, who went out and fetched him a glass of water, and so aided, he was enabled to prosecute his philippic to its florid end. Then, when the members for Portsmouth and Southwark rose together, hon. gentlemen, like the boy in the fable,

cried "Wolff! Wolff!" but the Speaker ruled in favour of Mr Arthur Cohen. The maiden speech of that popular lawyer, delivered in the most artificial of forensic styles, in favour of the motion, was not generally lauded as a model of Parliamentary oratory. Mr Gladstone at first turned bodily round in his seat to listen more attentively to his new ally, but very soon resumed his normal position, face to the front. Sir H. Drummond Wolff, when it came to his turn to speak, gave it as his opinion that the acceptance or refusal of Mr Bradlaugh was one which the House was competent to decide for itself without the assistance of a court of justice. They who inclined to favour an immediate division—and there were many such—hoped and believed that Mr Childers' temperate summing up would close the debate. That, however, was not to be, until after Mr Daly, as an Irish Catholic, had expressed his contempt for an "isolated atheist," and Sir Stafford Northcote had exhaustively and exhaustingly recounted the history of the Bradlaugh affair from the very beginning, at the late election, down to the moment of his speech.

At a quarter past twelve o'clock Professor Thorold Rogers essayed to speak, while the House called for a division, and, as a consequence, the Hon. Gentleman was howled and groaned at. He, on his part, roared back again; and, finding Hon. Members would not listen to him, ingeniously addressed the reporters in the gallery. Though willing, those gentlemen seemed unable to hear him, so loud was the clamour; and fairly beaten, he flung down a book which he held in his hand, and resumed his seat. The futile attempt of the Professor to address the Assembly at a juncture when the Opposition, with a prescience of victory, persistently demanded a division, roused their temper to a pitch which prepared the way for what

followed. Neither side was sure in which direction the balance of votes would incline. Both Liberals and Conservatives were full of hope and eager with expectation. Nor was much surprise manifested when politicians, almost always in direct rivalry, found themselves companions in the same lobby. At sound of the division bells, the solid crowd standing in the doorway dissolved ; the main body coming forward up the floor of the House, and so past the Speaker's chair to vote with the ayes.

Many a Liberal countenance wore the aspect of deep dejection ; many a Conservative face beamed with smiles. Duly and in order the House cleared, and after a somewhat unusually prolonged interval gradually re-filled. The Speaker resumed the chair, and the oblong strip of blue foolscap paper, on which the numbers were inscribed in a bold, round hand, was delivered to the Opposition teller and laid on the table. The news of the victory seemed to be thrilled in a moment through the Assembly, to the four corners of the House. At that moment Mr Gladstone, in evening dress, and with a red rose in the lappet of his coat—a smile upon his lips—sat conversing with the Minister beside him, apparently unaware of what was coming. Behind him ranged his party, close, compact, every man in his place, though not all equally confident. Suddenly the Premier lifted his head, looking straight before him, while the Opposition, as if moved by a common impulse, rose to their feet and sent forth a deafening cheer, a loud, glad shout of triumph ! Arms were held aloft, and hats waved round and round. The conquerors, warm with the glow of hard-won victory, leaped upon the benches, uttering joyful exclamations. Cheer echoed upon cheer, as if the hearts of men spoke in their voices.

Gradually, the din subsided, and there were heard the full, round tones of the Speaker calling "Order, order!" And when finally the numbers were announced, another scarcely less prolonged cheer rose from the Opposition. Almost as soon as the result became known, Mr Bradlaugh, who had waited within the precincts of the House, rushed frantically into New Palace-yard, and, flinging himself into a Hansom cab, drove rapidly away, down Parliament Street,—his always pallid cheeks more than ever colourless.

That night, or rather morning, the political clubs were in a condition of wild excitement; for the rumour had got abroad that Mr Bradlaugh would come again at noon to the table of the House, and demand to be sworn. Consequently Members were in their places early in the forenoon. There ensued, however, a delay in the proceedings; from some unexplained cause, prayers were not read till twenty minutes past twelve, and the imminent "scene" did not occur till the half-hour had struck. By that time more than four hundred Members were present. A dead silence reigned for a moment as the tall figure of Mr Bradlaugh was seen advancing up the floor. A few exclamations of disapproval were speedily drowned in cries of "Order, order!" and the junior Member for Northampton halted, facing the Chair. It can scarcely be said that his attitude was an easy or a graceful one. He stood close by the mace, pale and erect. There was about him a certain defiant air, and the large, shut mouth wore an expression of indomitable firmness. By some it was remarked that his old military habits—Mr Bradlaugh was at one time a soldier—had come back to him, for on preparing to encounter the Speaker his hands dropped down by his sides, as though he were standing "at attention."

As to the Speaker, the attitude of that functionary was of a judge prepared to listen to some application of which he had not had the slightest notice. Mr Brand might never have heard of Mr Bradlaugh or Mr Bradlaugh's grievances before, so placidly, indeed, did he regard the elect for Northampton, and it was not until Sir Erskine May, at the instance of the intruder himself, had walked up to the chair and reported the Hon. Member's business that the Speaker made the slightest movement. Then, however, in stately fashion, and, with all eyes turned upon him, he informed the appellant of what the House had decided on the previous evening, and requested him to withdraw. Mr Bradlaugh, however, had evidently no intention whatever of accepting this invitation, for, motionless as a statue, he stuck to his post, and asked for permission to speak. Whereupon there arose cries of "Order" and "Withdraw," which for a brief time stopped the current of Mr Bradlaugh's speech. But the noise ceasing, he began once more to discourse, whereupon the shouting was again resumed; its object turning round this time and viewing his antagonists with a proudly aggressive glance. What dire effect that concentrated frown was meant to convey is not clear; the result it produced was an increased shouting, which continued till for the time he ceased speaking. At length the storm subsided for a moment, and Mr Bradlaugh was again heard, advising the House to be "faithful to its old traditions." Then the uproar began once more, and only stopped when the Speaker decided that the hon. member would only be allowed to speak, if it were the pleasure of the House to hear him, and that he must withdraw while his application was considered; and in obedience to that command Mr Bradlaugh removed below the Bar.

It was made out from his interrupted, disjointed sentences that he desired to be heard upon his claim to take the oath before the House should finally determine to act on the previous day's Resolution.

After much lively discussion, it was agreed that Mr Bradlaugh be heard at the Bar. This time, however, he was not permitted to approach the mace, but had to content himself with standing behind the bar, which had now been drawn across the space between the two cross-benches. His speech, though loud in tone, and theatrical in display, was telling in effect; the passages in which he appealed to the generosity of the House being fairly well received—that is to say, without any interruption. A sentence, however, evoked indignation—the one in which he talked of having “a hundred thousand men at his back.” Parenthetically it may be observed that during this harangue Mr Bradlaugh had the notes of his protest written on the back of the Committee's report; and that his hat placidly rested upon the floor. The appeal ended, he withdrew.

Mr Labouchere then moved, “That Mr Bradlaugh, the Member for Northampton, having been heard at the Bar in support of his claim to take the oath, the resolution of the House relative to his claim be rescinded;” and Mr Gorst moved the adjournment of the debate. Mr Labouchere's proposal met with but little favour, Mr Gladstone especially standing up for the dignity of the House, which he declared could only suffer were such a proposition to be carried into effect. Both motions were then withdrawn, and the House expressed its pleasure that Mr Bradlaugh be once more called in, and he was allowed again to approach the Speaker. This time he was more truculent in his bearing than ever, walking briskly up the floor as though of right.

The Speaker, however, in as few words as possible, intimated that his claim had been rejected, and that he must now finally withdraw; and it only remained for him to comply with the wishes of the assembly for the episode to have ended.

Not at all disposed to obey the mandate of the House, Mr Bradlaugh, in a loud voice, approaching almost to a shout, informed the Speaker that he should insist upon his "rights." Tremendous excitement followed this outburst, mingled with cries of "Order," which resounded from every part of the Chamber, and even the Speaker seemed to be somewhat irritated by the dogged resistance to his authority. Still Mr Bradlaugh refused to retire, and called on the name of the law to his support. Again the Speaker warned the recalcitrant one that if he did not speedily disappear measures must be taken to compel him. Nevertheless he refused to go, reminding the Speaker that the Chair could not exercise any force without the order of the House—a challenge which provoked an immediate appeal to the assembled members for instructions, and authority to act. To this Sir Stafford Northcote responded by a motion, "That Mr Bradlaugh do now withdraw," and a division was called. But the subject of the motion budged not an inch, remaining face to face with the Speaker.

When the numbers were presently announced it was found that while thirty-eight supported the choice of Northampton, 326 were for sending him summarily away in the custody of Captain Gosset. That officer was ready to do his duty, yet waited while the hon. member was once again told to go. This admonition having no effect, the Sergeant-at-Arms, by direction of the Speaker, advanced, hand on sword, to the right of Mr Bradlaugh, and placed the other hand on his shoulder.

For a moment the newly-made prisoner hesitated, but at length slowly retreated backwards towards the bar, only to turn round again, however, and advance half-way up the floor with Captain Gosset in his rear. "I claim my right as a member of this House," he shouted, "to take my seat." "The House cannot imprison me," he added, "until I have taken my oath and my seat." But the Sergeant-at-Arms was clear in his duty, and taking hold of the prisoner's arm pushed him gently backwards towards the bar. Again he rebelled, and again ran forward to make another appeal amid a scene of intense excitement. Captain Gosset continued, however, to insist quietly, and, again with gentle touch, guided Mr Bradlaugh in the direction of the door. By this time the House was thoroughly roused, and, on the appeal of the Speaker as to what should be done with so obstinate a person, unanimously supported the counsel of Sir Stafford Northcote that the offender should be consigned to the Clock Tower.

Once more Mr Bradlaugh protested, and then, while the debate on the adjournment of the House continued, calmly sat down under the Peers Gallery. A division followed on the motion of Sir Stafford Northcote, that the Speaker do issue a warrant for Mr Bradlaugh's confinement. Mr Gladstone supported the proposal, which was carried by 274 votes against seven.

Several attempts to adjourn the debate failed; and finally it was "ordered, that Mr Bradlaugh having disobeyed the order and resisted the authority of the House, be for his said offence taken into the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, attending this House, and that the Speaker do issue his warrant accordingly."

During the final division, Mr Bradlaugh had withdrawn from his seat, and was waiting outside until the

numbers had been proclaimed. He then entered the outer door, and stood inside the corridor separating the lobby from the chamber, so that when Captain Gosset rose to execute the order the offender was close at hand, and ready to surrender himself. Accompanied by the Sergeant-at-Arms and Inspector Denning, and followed by a crowd of members, he then passed along the passage leading to the library, and thence on to the Sergeant's private apartments, and was presently removed to the Clock Tower.

The recital of Mr Labouchere's notice, that he would ask leave to bring in a bill to amend the Parliamentary oath, was among the first business transacted on the following day. The House, generally full during the first hour of the sitting, was more than ordinarily so on this occasion, members being attracted to hear Mr Gladstone's answer to the proposal of Mr Mac Iver partially to disfranchise Northampton. Mr Mac Iver was interrupted by cries of "No," and "Order;" and when the Prime Minister replied that the Government did not intend to accept his proposition, the Right Honourable Gentleman was received with an approving cheer.

At five o'clock Sir Stafford Northcote rose to inquire of the Government whether it was their intention to make any motion regarding Mr Bradlaugh. The First Lord of the Treasury having, in his smoothest tones and blindest manner, replied to the leader of the Opposition to the effect that Ministers had not, so far, proposed to themselves any action in the matter—a statement which was cheered by his supporters—Sir Stafford Northcote formally moved that Mr Bradlaugh be released from prison. Although there did not seem to be anything inherently comic in the motion itself, or

in the delivery or action of Sir Stafford, the supporters of the Government below the gangway burst into a hearty peal of laughter, as if the proposition to liberate the junior Member for Northampton from his durance in the Clock Tower was one of the merriest of jests. The Opposition chief, however, was not to be laughed out of his intention or of his gravity. He went on to say that nothing could be gained by keeping Mr Bradlaugh in confinement; that the House having supported its order and asserted its authority, the time had come to set the prisoner free.

Scarcely had the leader of the Opposition resumed his seat, and the Speaker put the motion, when Mr Labouchere, with much deliberation of manner, informed the House that, in the event of Mr Bradlaugh being released, it was his intention at once to make his way to the Chamber, to repeat the demand of the day before, and assert what the Prime Minister and many of his colleagues, the Attorney-General, and the ex-Attorney-General esteemed was his right. During the delivery of the speech of the sitting Member for Northampton, many Hon. Members smiled, as if at the temerity of the prisoner, while others applauded his boldness. Mr Gladstone took refuge in pen and ink, and Mr Bright gazed long and earnestly at Mr Bradlaugh's champion.

The explanation of Mr Labouchere, on behalf of his co-member, seemed to excite Mr Gorst beyond endurance. That Hon. Member, in tones of earnest entreaty, and with many swayings of his body to and fro, called on Mr Gladstone to guide the House in this momentous conjuncture. The statement of Mr Labouchere with respect to the law officers of the Crown ought not, he said, to go uncontradicted. Was the House to be sub-

jected to another exhibition of physical force on the part of Mr Bradlaugh? There must be no mistake on that point. The more energetically Mr Gorst demanded a speech from Mr Gladstone the more the immediate followers of that Right Hon. Gentleman exhorted him to silence; Mr Gorst, indeed, found some difficulty in making himself heard above the clatter of their voices. Mr Gladstone, however, ultimately accepted the challenge of the Hon. Member for Chatham. Mr Bradlaugh, he thought, had done all, and more than all, that was necessary to assert his right, and he certainly could not be excused for having persisted in his attempt to disturb the House, after having had the "manual pressure" of the Serjeant-at-Arms applied to him. Beyond a general *resumé* of well-authenticated facts, the Prime Minister could scarcely have afforded Mr Gorst the satisfaction which he sought.

Then Mr O'Connor Power, bubbling over with genuine Hibernian eloquence, rose from among a little knot of Home Rulers at the tail of the Opposition; and, while in passionate periods he pleaded against the obstruction to business caused by these constantly-recurring episodes, Messrs Gladstone and Bright, and Sir William Harcourt, literally as well as figuratively, put their heads together on the Ministerial bench opposite. Mr O'Connor Power protested against the House being made "an advertising medium for Mr Bradlaugh and his friends" by the continuance of this "scandalous controversy." "Even if Mr Bradlaugh were let out of prison and attempted to force an entrance into the House, surely the doorkeepers might be instructed to deal with him." So said Mr O'Connor Power, and so thought the House itself, for on the Speaker putting Sir Stafford's motion, it was agreed to in comparative silence, and without a dissentient.

Thereupon Messrs Labouchere, T. P. O'Connor, Biggar, Parnell, and the late Mr Ashton Dilke hurried through the crowded lobby to inform Mr Bradlaugh of the mercy of Parliament, and to congratulate him on his release. Shortly afterwards Mr Bradlaugh himself, preceded by Mr Ashton Dilke, came rapidly along the corridor from the direction of the library, and, with his eyes directed towards the pavement, passed hurriedly into the House, pushing excitedly past and nearly overbalancing an hon. member who stood in the doorway, and took his accustomed place, outside the precincts of debate. No sooner was Mr Bradlaugh, looking but little the worse for his violent encounter with authority the previous day, once more under the eye of the Speaker, than Mr T. B. Potter hastened to shake hands with him, a form of congratulation which was also indulged in by Mr P. A. Taylor. Mr Bradlaugh remained in the House for about ten minutes, but after a short conference with the Sergeant-at-Arms he retired,—this time without “manual pressure,” and of his own free will.

The prisoner of Parliament was released from the Clock Tower on Thursday evening, and next day a dense rough crowd assembled in Westminster Hall to see their hero, who, accompanied by his daughters and Mrs Besant, drove up in an open carriage. He and his party were vociferously cheered as they came up the Hall and passed within the precincts of the House. Before prayers, at a quarter to two, looking pleased and proud, he appeared in the doorway of the chamber, under the clock, and mounting the cross benches, where he carefully deposited his hat, left the House until the rest of the members had concluded their devotions. The Speaker having taken the chair, prayers followed

and business began. A large contingent of peers looked down upon a full House, the front benches facing the table being crowded with members of the Government and ex-Ministers. Mr Gladstone, the Marquis of Hartington, Mr Bright, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr Forster, and Mr Chamberlain sat together, and, in common with the leaders of the Opposition, were better informed of what was to follow than the rank and file of members on both sides. By this time Mr Bradlaugh had come in again, and was engaged in earnest conversation with Mr Labouchere. Presently the latter gentleman rose, made a way for himself through the crowd into the lobby, and after an absence of a few minutes, returned into the House from behind the chair. He held a written paper in his hand, and at first consulted with Sir Erskine May and afterwards with Mr Speaker. Passing once more out of the House behind the chair, he was followed by Mr Bright, who returned almost immediately to his seat next Mr Gladstone. Hon. members followed with their gaze these erratic movements, although a general suspicion now began to pervade the assembly that the mountain might bring forth nothing larger than a mouse. Inquiring glances were ever and anon cast from Ministers to Mr Bradlaugh and back again. The former were busy with their papers or discussing among themselves, the latter looked out from the gloom where he sat with an expression as of supreme unconcern upon his features.

First in order of that day's episode, Mr Percy Wyndham gave notice that he would ask leave to bring in a bill to settle the legal right of members of Parliament to make affirmation instead of taking an oath, and immediately afterwards came the notice of the sitting member for Northampton, which confirmed the already

general impression that there would be no scene. His proposition that the resolution of Tuesday last, shutting the door in Mr Bradlaugh's face, should be read and rescinded, was greeted with cheers from independent Liberal members.

Mr Gladstone, although he had not consulted with his colleagues on the subject, was ready and willing to offer the facilities necessary for the discussion and reconsideration of "Mr Bradlaugh's rights." There would, he said, be a Cabinet Council on the following day, when the matter should be fully considered. The willingness of the Prime Minister to reopen the entire subject, the cheers with which his statement was received from all parts of the House, and the ominous silence of the leader of the Opposition, suggested to all present that the resolution of the previous Tuesday might have been somewhat too hastily, not to say rashly, recorded.

Mr Bradlaugh now seemed to enjoy his first laugh in Parliament at the expense of Lord Randolph Churchill. That noble lord, amid howls of disapproval, having inquired of the sitting member for Northampton whether Mr Bradlaugh intended to continue his attendance in the House, the Speaker interposed and said the question was irrelevant and could not be put. This discomfiture of an active and avowed Parliamentary enemy tickled Mr Bradlaugh amazingly; his face beamed with smiles; he laughed aloud, then rose and quitted the House.

For a little while "privilege" gave place to public business, but very soon Mr Newdegate stirred for a moment the now expiring embers of excitement by demanding that Mr Bradlaugh should not be allowed to use "privilege," at any time of night after as well as before business, to take his seat. Apparently unable to

comprehend the drift of the question, Mr Gladstone, Mr Bright, and Lord Hartington, consulted together for a minute, and then Mr Gladstone rose very slowly, and frankly confessed himself at a loss to know what was meant. Mr Newdegate, in spite of loud and angry cries of "Order," gave his answer with straightforward alacrity. He asked that "the person who claims to represent Northampton" should not be allowed to renew the "scene" of Wednesday. The House took upon itself to answer his suggestion with loud shouts of derision; for it was manifest under the circumstances that the question was both ill-timed and ill-advised. Mr Gladstone apparently had the House well in hand—so far as the Bradlaugh incident was concerned. He replied that the gentleman, who gave them all so much anxiety, should be duly informed of the result of the Cabinet Council. If any disturbance should occur between that time and the morning sitting of the following Tuesday, when the matter was fixed to come on again—though not necessarily for lengthened discussion—he should endeavour to discharge his duty according to the circumstances that might arise.

Although Mr Bradlaugh's name cropped up from day to day during the interim, Mr Gladstone did not formally move his next resolution until Thursday, July 1st, when the honourable gentleman was, himself, from first to last an apparently absorbed observer of the proceedings, including the handing in of several petitions against his admission, or "that of any other professed Atheist." This day Prince Christian sat conspicuous over the clock, supported on his left by the Earl of Jersey, Lords de Lisle, Braybourne, Napier and Ettrick, and a large number of peers. All the Ministers were present, and the House, densely crowded from wall to wall, presented an unusually lively appearance.

Between the hours of four and half-past five o'clock, hon. members listened with such patience as they could command to a long list of questions and answers. All thoughts, however, were directed in one channel, and the feeling of relief was general when Mr Gladstone, who had for some time previously sat quietly with his right hand grasping his left wrist, rose to propose a sitting for the next day (Saturday), and also that the case of Mr Bradlaugh should be taken forthwith. The Speaker easily disposed of Mr Gorst's point of order with regard to a proposed resolution of the Prime Minister's, which he contended was in every respect similar to that of Mr Labouchere's, negatived on the 22nd of the previous month. He argued that it came within the Rule which debars a question, on which the House has pronounced judgment, being again raised during the same session. Appealed to by the Prime Minister, the Speaker ruled that Mr Gladstone's was a new resolution, and that he was perfectly in order. When, however, Mr Gorst remarked that Ministers proposed to "break the law," cheers and counter-cheers echoed and re-echoed—the first direct evidence of an excitement which so far that evening had been kept within bounds.

Mr Newdegate had risen with Mr Gorst; and Mr Courtney had wrestled for a moment with the Speaker for possession of the House when Mr Gorst had finished. It was now the turn of Mr Newdegate and of several other gentlemen to present more petitions for and against the admission of the junior member for Northampton, and for Mr Gladstone to move his resolution, which he did with considerable deliberation. He moved "That every person returned as a member of this House, who may claim to be a person for the time being by law permitted to make a solemn affirmation or declara-

tion instead of taking an oath, shall henceforth (notwithstanding so much of the resolution adopted by this House on June 22nd last, as relates to the affirmation) be permitted without question, to make and subscribe a solemn affirmation in the form prescribed by the Parliamentary Oaths' Act, 1866, as altered by the Promissory Oaths' Act, 1868, subject to any liability by statute." He explained that the object of the Government was mainly to prevent the recurrence of those unbecoming scenes which had lately brought discredit upon the proceedings of Parliament, and to secure the peace and order of the House, to protect its dignity, and to maintain its police. His difficulty had been with regard to the jurisdiction of hon. members, and he had, after mature deliberation, come to the conclusion that they had no jurisdiction in the matter, and could not deny Mr Bradlaugh the enjoyment of his demanded right to affirm. He believed that many members had formerly voted under a misapprehension of the facts of the case, and that they would now see their way to declare in the opposite direction. In course of his remarks he said it was notorious that the decency of the House had only been maintained for the past few days by Mr Bradlaugh being made aware that such a motion as he then proposed would be submitted to them. Otherwise there would have been a repetition of the painful scenes with which they were familiar.

The speech was received with cheers, which were met with counter cheers on the appearance of Sir Stafford Northcote at the table to defend his supporters from the charge of the responsibility of having encouraged and fostered the difficulty which it was now proposed to solve; and he drew forth the ready laughter

of the House when, while admitting the numerical strength of the Liberal party, he said he did not think that the Conservatives should be called on to apologise for their existence. It was not right, he declared, to force such a resolution as this—a virtual rescinding of what had been done the previous week—on the House by what amounted to a threat that Mr Bradlaugh would otherwise continue to create a disturbance. It was not even just to Mr Bradlaugh to make such a gratuitous assumption. If that gentleman were allowed to take his seat, and if he were sued for penalties, the House might be involved in a series of actions at law. As an amendment, he moved "That this House cannot adopt a resolution which virtually rescinds the resolution passed by it on June 22nd last." The fault, if fault there were, lay with the Premier, who, at a supreme moment, stood aside and relegated the position of leadership to himself. Those behind the ex-leader of the House, above and below the gangway, supported him with frequent expressions of assent. Though for the moment held in comparative restraint, the Opposition were manifestly full of fight, and when the right hon. gentleman resumed his seat, amid a storm of Conservative cheers, his friends quitted the House in large numbers, possibly, as the clock pointed to the dinner hour, to stay themselves for a desperate even though a losing battle. Many Liberals, including Mr Bradlaugh, also departed temporarily, leaving Messrs Gladstone and Bright to the enjoyment of comparative solitude and of Mr Marriott's maiden speech in their defence.

While the majority of the opposing forces were preparing themselves at the dinner table for a renewal of the conflict, the few hon. gentlemen left to take care of

the camps indulged in a friendly engagement, as it were, to keep their hands in. Mr P. J. Smyth's florid eloquence was wasted upon an array of barren benches. Among the many remarkable suggestions of that hon. member in antagonism to Mr Bradlaugh, he proposed that, in the event of the Government gaining a victory, "a new passage should be added to the statute book declaring God expunged by special desire."

Mr Borlase, a lately elected member, described the present age as one in which "the previous question is being moved on every subject human and divine;" and Mr Corbett declaimed against Mr Bradlaugh's "Besantine" doctrines of morality and avowed Atheism. The person thus referred to looked on apparently unconcerned, while in his immediate presence Mr Corbett described him as the "human embodiment of the reverse of virtue," "clamouring outside to take his seat." Not only was the insulted member of Parliament not outside at the time, clamouring or otherwise, but he had not been absent for more than a few minutes altogether; and oblivious of Mr Corbett's epithets stayed on to nod his head in approval at the late Sir Henry Jackson's vigorous speech in his favour.

Inasmuch as six orators could not becomingly address the Speaker at one and the same time, five others who had sprung to their feet along with Mr Staveley Hill had to give way to that gentleman, and the expression of his views that, according to law, Mr Bradlaugh had no right to either swear or affirm. Mr Parnell, with unusual timidity of manner, and amid a well-sustained chorus of Liberal cheers, declared for the Government at the risk, he said, of being taken in Ireland for an Atheist and appearing to side with principles which to him were odious and abominable. And now, at close

upon ten o'clock—the House being nearly full again—whenever an hon. gentleman sat down, at least half a score of others vainly endeavoured to catch the Speaker's eye.

Mr A. M. Sullivan, his voice half drowned in Conservative cheers, declared that no such outrage as that perpetrated by Mr Bradlaugh on the memorable Wednesday had taken place in the House since Cromwell ordered “that bauble” to be taken away. Were the Commons to be bullied out of their votes by a new reign of rowdyism? Were they to have a repetition of that scene when “Mr Plimsoll stood on one leg in the middle of the floor and shook his fist in the face of the Speaker?” The resolution proposed that night “marked a turning point in the history of England, and would fix on the door-posts of Parliament the flood-mark of unbelief and infidelity.” No such applause as that which greeted the termination of Mr Sullivan's speech had yet sounded during the debate. Members had dined.

Mr Richard looked with infinite sadness and pity upon the “no creed” of Mr Bradlaugh, but all the same he would vote for his admission. He objected to oaths altogether, and drew a graphic picture of what lately took place in the House when “four or five Hon. Members scrambled to lay hold of a single Testament and swore with much good-humoured merriment.” At five minutes past eleven o'clock the Liberals began an attempt to stop Sir Henry Drummond Wolff from addressing the House by repeated cries of “Divide.” The member for Portsmouth, however, threatened to move the adjournment of the debate, and for a few minutes he was allowed to go on, being, however, listened to with great impatience by the Liberals, who, assured of victory, desired to reap the fruits thereof

with as little delay as possible. Mr M'Coan,—like Mr Borlase,—a new member, did not desire to indulge “in the easy rhetoric of abuse,” but he would say that “a more offensive representative of Atheism than Mr Bradlaugh he could not conceive,” and he was going on in a still stronger strain, when the Speaker warned him to be more guarded in his language.

The House all along excited, had now grown noisy. After a short speech from the Solicitor-General, Sir Richard Cross pleaded against the prolongation of the debate, at the same time arguing that the House was not justified in rescinding its former judgment simply because it was threatened by one man backed by a mob. At the conclusion of Sir Richard's speech, at half-past twelve o'clock, Mr O'Donnell asked to be allowed to explain his views on the “revolutionary procedure” of the Government. His attempt, however, to read extracts from some of Mr Bradlaugh's works was promptly stopped by the other side. Mr Hussey Vivian next spoke on behalf of “several members who voted in the majority with the Opposition on the last occasion, and who hoped to vote with the Government in the majority to-night.” Amid groans of derision from the Opposition, he said that no pressure had been put on the Liberals. For an hour and more every speech had been interrupted by loud and reiterated calls for a division, and when the late General Burnaby rose to speak, so great was the uproar that he had to adopt the strident tones of an officer drilling a squad close to a cataract in a thunderstorm. In his hand he held a packet of letters, the contents of which he shouted out, and, casting each aside, when done with, cried: “That is the opinion of a Moravian,” or of “the Bishop of London,” or “the chief Rabbi,” &c. Informed by Mr

Speaker that he must not read his speech, General Burnaby drew from the back pocket of his dress coat a solid roll of manuscript, and held it up to the Chair. Shouts of laughter greeted every fresh sally of eccentricity. Unfortunately, the debate was sinking into an unseemly farce, the line between the mention of sacred names and of profane laughter having quite given way.

The House then divided on Sir Stafford Northcote's amendment, which was negatived by 303 to 249. When the numbers were announced, giving a 'victory to the Government of fifty-four, the scene of Tuesday week was repeated over again. Grave members of Parliament shouted with a boyish abandonment of delight. Gallantly leading a forlorn hope, Mr A. M. Sullivan next moved as an amendment to add to Mr Gladstone's resolution: "Provided always that this resolution shall apply to persons hereafter returned as members to this House." He was beaten by 38. The extraordinary tumult and wild excitement which followed lasted several minutes. Such an exhibition and revulsion of feeling has seldom, if ever, been witnessed within the walls of the oldest and freest, and, as a rule, the most temperate-minded Parliament in the world.

We now approach the end, long delayed, of the first part of the Bradlaugh scandal. At a quarter past two o'clock on the afternoon of Friday, July 2d, 1880, in pursuance of the Premier's resolution, the Junior Member for Northampton, amid silence, and an apparently studied indifference, affirmed and took his seat. The person whose negation of belief had exercised the public mind was not present during prayers, but came in immediately afterwards and stood bolt upright just outside the bar, facing the Speaker, on the Liberal side, solitary, with grave and downcast expression, as of a man un-

certain what sort of reception might await him. The light was low, the air hot and heavy, and the Chamber looked woefully dreary in the more than common gloom of a wet day. Scattered about the Opposition benches were some thirty Members of the rank and file of Conservatism and of the third party. None of the chiefs of the Opposition put in an appearance. Mr Gladstone was likewise absent, but the Marquis of Hartington, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr Bright, and some other Members of the Government sat on the front Ministerial bench, kept in countenance by about forty of their following. The peers stayed away, nor were any distinguished strangers present in the place set apart for their accommodation.

For a little while Mr Bradlaugh, standing all alone, uncheered by a smile or sound of welcome, seemed in doubt as to what next it would be proper for him to do. Presently he came slowly, very slowly, up the floor, looking neither to the right nor to the left, halted near to the crown of the mace at the corner of the table on the Ministerial side, and stood looking constrained and anxious for at least a minute's space. Then Sir Erskine May rose from the opposite end of the table, and, holding the printed form of affirmation in his right hand, went up to Mr Bradlaugh and repeated the prescribed form of words to him, but in a voice inaudible to the majority of those present. Bowing somewhat stiffly to the Clerk of the House, the new Member for Northampton, with much deliberation, signed the roll of Parliament; whereupon Sir Erskine May preceded him the few steps to the Speaker's chair, saying, "Mr Bradlaugh, Member for Northampton." The Speaker held out his hand; Mr Bradlaugh touched it formally, and, still with the downcast look upon his face, passed

out behind the chair, amid the same unbroken silence which had reigned during the very few minutes occupied in the function. Allowing himself but sufficient time to traverse the corridor, which runs parallel with the length of the House, Mr Bradlaugh came, this time, boldly into the chamber, looking now well pleased ; hurriedly mounted to the end of the bench on the third row from the floor on the Liberal side below the gangway, and, without a friendly hand held out to welcome him, realised his conquest of Parliament, and took his seat for Northampton. There was, however, a drop of bitterness yet to be distilled into the victor's cup of triumph. No sooner was he installed in his seat, than Mr Newdegate, rising with the manner of a man about to perform an agreeable office, and looking toward the Chair, held up a paper in his hand, and said that on his return home in the morning of that day he had found the petition which he now had the pleasure to present, praying that the House would not admit to their "fellowship" one "who disbelieved in Almighty God."

THE BRADLAUGH SCANDAL.

PART II.—1881.

MR BRADLAUGH affirmed with the full knowledge, and with an explicit understanding that he might be fined in a court of law, on account of every time he sat and voted in the House. And he continued to sit and vote

notwithstanding that an action for the recovery of penalties was brought against him—ostensibly by an informer. He lost the cause, thereby incurring a liability of £100,000. And on March 14, 1881, Mr Gorst, founding himself on the judgment of Mr Justice Mathew, in the suit named, raised the question of Mr Bradlaugh's competency to take part in the proceedings of Parliament.

Mr Bradlaugh that afternoon came quietly in, bearing a huge parcel containing thirty-two bundles of rolled-up paper, which he gently deposited on the seat beside him; and soon after, in answer to a call from the Chair, rose to speak, when Mr Gorst ventured to submit that "the gentleman who has just risen is not a member of this House," and proceeded to give his reasons for that statement. While Mr Gorst was still arguing, the word had gone forth, and the crowd increased, in the expectation of a wrangle. After a slight skirmish, on the point of order, among Mr Gorst and Mr Bradlaugh, Mr Labouchere and Mr Callan, the Speaker decided that Mr Gorst was in possession of the House. The member for Chatham was at least frank. He did not care much how the matter of the fines might be arranged, so that the Junior Member for Northampton was precluded from sitting and voting. The Attorney-General and Sir John Holker having politely differed as to the nature of the point in dispute, the Senior Member for Northampton read a letter from his colleague—who, during the reading, sat a few seats behind him at his right hand, leaning forward to catch the words as they were recited to the House—stating that the writer would appeal against the late judgment; that he would, if necessary, submit himself to the will of his constituents, but that meanwhile he deemed it his duty to sit and vote.

Lord Randolph Churchill, however, was decidedly opposed to the "gentleman who *was* Member for Northampton" taking any part in the proceedings. And all the time that the noble lord continued speaking, Mr Bradlaugh smiled grimly, eyeing his thirty-two petitions "against perpetual pensions."

Mr Speaker lost no time in deciding that Mr Bradlaugh must be held to possess all the rights conferred on him by his election, "at least until the House should otherwise order." And those rights included the right of reply to his enemies. There and then he made the most of it. At the beginning it was no easy matter for him to restrain his excitement, but growing more composed as he went on, he taunted the noble lord with being "mistaken or misinformed of the law;" and the laugh was certainly not against him when he recommended his chief antagonist to consult "any ordinary law book." Then, to the sound of Radical cheers, he took his bundle of "petitions against perpetual pensions" off the seat beside him, and carried it in his arms along the floor to the bag, with wide-open mouth, close to the clerk at the table, and as he did so, Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr Arthur Balfour, and Mr Gorst rose simultaneously and walked, in Indian file, out at the door.

Although a winner for the moment, it was plain to Mr Bradlaugh and to the rest of the House that he must not hope to sit and vote without constantly reiterated protests from the other side; and consequently on April 1st, Mr Labouchere moved, and obtained leave, "That a new writ be issued for the Borough of Northampton in the room of Mr Bradlaugh, who since his election has vacated his seat by not taking the oath required by Parliament."

Mr Gorst, seeing in this not unwary precaution an opportunity for attack, twitted the Government with having "been led into a scrape" through following the advice of Mr Bradlaugh. Mr Gladstone, however, repudiated the idea, and said it seemed to him that the Member for Chatham "moved these questions with astonishing delight, going backwards and forwards and round about them." But the Government did not think Mr Bradlaugh's case "so savoury," and hoped that the new writ would be granted without further delay. "It would be an impertinence in me to decide whether Mr Bradlaugh was entitled to swear or not," said the Prime Minister. The Government, however, took upon themselves the responsibility of whatever might arise through the granting of the new writ.

At the election for Northampton, which followed almost immediately, Mr Bradlaugh polled 3437 votes as against 3305 votes recorded for Mr Corbett, the Conservative candidate, winning by the numerically small majority of 132. Considering the temper of the constituency, it may be said that the contest was conducted in an orderly manner; and after the announcement of the numbers, Mr Bradlaugh, addressing the crowd, admitted the struggle had been a severe one—keener, he confessed, than he had expected. "However, victory rested with them, and they could afford to be generous." He trusted in the House of Commons to justify their choice, and win honour for the borough by vindicating its rights, despite all that the Tories might do.

The following correspondence, which afterwards became the subject of remark, passed at this time between the leader of the Opposition and the newly elected member :—

“30 ST JAMES' PLACE, *April 25.*

“DEAR SIR,—I think it right, as a matter of courtesy—though you are probably already aware of my intention—to give you notice that I shall feel myself bound to object to your being allowed to take the oath on your re-election for Northampton in the absence of any statement on your part which might remove the difficulty felt by a considerable number of members.—I remain, yours faithfully,

“STAFFORD H. NORTHCOTE.

“C. Bradlaugh, Esq., M.P.”

“Right Hon. Sir Stafford Northcote, M.P.

“DEAR SIR,—I am at least sure that whatever opposition you think it right to offer will be that of an honourable gentleman, and I thank you for the courtesy of your notice. I do not quite gather from your letter what statement—that according to your view—any members of the House of Commons have the right to require from a duly-elected member before he takes his seat. I imagined such right was that only of his constituents. As I am writing you, will you permit me to give you my assurance that the pamphlets bearing the name of Henry Varley, circulated to members of the House, contain many deliberate misstatements of my views, attribute to me in some instances language I have never used, and, when dealing with any words of mine, nearly always pervert and separate such words from the qualifying context.—Yours sincerely,

“April 25.

“C. BRADLAUGH.”

This mention of the name of a Mr Henry Varley referred to the writer of a declamatory pamphlet reflecting on the candidate, and freely circulated in Northampton while the election was pending.

Within twenty-four hours of the receipt of Sir Stafford Northcote's letter, Mr Bradlaugh came to the table, introduced by Mr Labouchere and Mr Burt; and Sir Erskine May, having handed him the Testament, Sir Stafford rose as if about to address the House, when he was forestalled by Mr Speaker, who said: "The Hon. Member for Northampton having been introduced, has come to the table to take the oath required by law in the accustomed form. He is prepared to comply with every provision of the statutes in order to take his seat in this House. Undoubtedly a proceeding so regular and formal ought, under ordinary circumstances, to be continued without interruption, but having regard to former resolutions of the House, and to the reports of its Committees in reference to this matter, I cannot withhold from the House an opportunity of expressing its judgment upon the new conditions under which the oath is now proposed to be taken." Mr Bradlaugh was then directed to withdraw.

Clenching the Testament firmly in his hand, Mr Bradlaugh earnestly pleaded to be allowed to address the House. But ere he could gain his point, the leader of the Opposition moved that Mr Bradlaugh be not "permitted to go through the form of words of the oath prescribed by statute," basing his motion on the report of last year's Committee, as well as on the decision arrived at by the House. His contention was that Mr Bradlaugh could not be regarded as a stranger whose opinions were unknown, but that those opinions openly expressed derided the oath as a meaningless form; that, if he now took it, the act would not be a "taking within the meaning of the statute;" and he further insisted that the House could not make themselves parties to such a process. Those were no new

arguments, and they were met by Mr Horace Davey with strong counter-reasonings, based on Parliamentary precedent, which, he averred, entitled any person, not disqualified, to take the oath without question. He moved an amendment setting forth this right, and declaring the House precluded from entertaining any grounds whatever extraneous to the transaction.

A flood of passionate eloquence was now poured forth by that truly wonderful orator, Mr Bright. It was clear to him that "the whole matter was put as a question of religious disability." "Irreligious disability you mean," cried a voice from among the Tories. But Mr Bright took no heed of the interruption. He thought it was a gross interference with Mr Bradlaugh to assume that the oath would not be binding on his conscience; and, to the distinct sound of laughter, stated that though he would not name names, he might mention others among them who had expressed similar opinions to those entertained by "the gentleman who now asked to take his seat according to law." With steady gaze, uplifted arm, and raised utterance, he cried:

"A bigot may swell the sail he sets for heaven
With blasts from hell."

"I hold," he trumpeted forth, "that there can be nothing consonant with Christianity in its highest principles, and nothing consonant with that religious freedom for which our fathers have striven, in determining still to obstruct the Hon. Member for Northampton when he comes to this table to take the oath. I hope no gentleman in this House who has any regard for religious freedom and social and parliamentary and constitutional freedom, as all the great lights of freedom in this country have understood it, will give a vote which shall debar the

constituency of Northampton from their due and rightful representation in this House."

Notwithstanding that Mr Bright had been broken in upon with all kinds of exclamations, including cries of "Shame," his speech was magnificent—as an effort of oratory—and when he sat down a vibration seemed to linger in the air, as when the swelling sound of a great organ is suddenly stilled.

Honourable members being anxious to hear Mr Bradlaugh, he was permitted to make his defence. He spoke at the bar of the House well and earnestly, reiterating all the well-known arguments, and concluding with this remarkable assertion: "I wish to say that the Liberals have never aided me in this House. I have had to fight by myself and for my own hand. I have been hindered in every way that it was possible to hinder me, and it has only been by the help of the people that I have been enabled to fight this fight, and that I am here to-day after those five struggles in thirteen years. You have a right to vacate my seat. You have a right to stand between me and that table; but it is the right of force and not of law. At present I am under the protection of the return that sent me here. When I am seated, I shall be under the jurisdiction of the House, and you may unseat me. But if there be one lesson which the House has recorded more solemnly than another, it is that there shall be no infringement of the right and judgment of a constituency in sending a member to this House against whom there is no statutory disqualification. Let me appeal to the generosity of this House as well as to its strength. It has traditions of liberty on both sides. I do not complain that members on that (the Opposition) side try to keep me out. They act according to their lights. They may

think that my poor services may be injurious to them." Here there were cries of "No! No!" "Then why not," he continued, "let me in? If it be not a personal question, then it is a religious question. You must accept the one issue or the other. I apologise to the House for trespassing on its patience, because I feel how generous it has been to me from the first time of my speech until the present; and I would ask you now, do not plunge with me into a struggle which I would shun. The law gives me no remedy if you decide against me. Do not mock at the constituency. If you shut me outside the law, then you only leave me lawless agitation instead of reasonable plea. There is no tribunal before which I can plead for justice. Do you think I am an obnoxious man? Do you think I have no one on my side? If that be so, the more reason that this House, grand in its strength of centuries in the struggle for the immortality of liberty, should now exercise generosity in dealing with one who, to-morrow, may be forced into a struggle of public opinion against you."

The appeal failed. Mr Gladstone and the Attorney-General said all they could say for him, and Sir Hardinge Giffard and Mr Newdegate said all they knew against him, and in favour of keeping him out; and when the vote was taken he was beaten by 33 in a House of 383 members. Advancing to the table, the Speaker told him to withdraw, but he refused on the ground that "the resolution of the House was against the law." Puzzled as to what it would be right to do next, Mr Speaker asked for instructions. And in an instant shouts of "Gladstone! Northcote! Northcote! Gladstone! Northcote!" rent the air. The Premier, however, did not respond, but sat, pale and with compressed lips; his hands before him, his body low down in his seat.

When the tumult had somewhat subsided, Sir Stafford Northcote rose deliberately, and coming to the table, cheered by his supporters, desired to put a question "to the Prime Minister, the leader of the House." Possibly the amiable Sir Stafford may not have meant to be ironical, but at the word, "leader of the House," his friends burst into a mocking laugh, varied with simulated fits of coughing. He asked whether Mr Gladstone "intended to propose any counsel, any course for the purpose of maintaining the authority of the House and of the Chair."

No. Mr Gladstone had no such intention. He had voted with the minority, and he left it to the majority to carry out their vote. Sir William Harcourt, for one, appreciated this retort immensely, so much so indeed, that Sir Stafford called across the table, almost angrily, that he had a difficulty in seeing what it was that amused the Home Secretary in this matter. For his part he thought Mr Gladstone had "abdicated the proper functions of his position." He, himself, considered "the honour of the House involved in the transaction," and though he accepted the responsibility under protest, he would move "that Mr Bradlaugh be ordered to withdraw."

Mr Gladstone, as ever ready for the fray, did not want to be "lectured" by the leader of the Opposition as to what was his duty; and Mr Bright did not see the use of having another division, so the motion was agreed to, and Mr Bradlaugh, who during the noisy duel between the chieftains had kept quite close to the Treasury Bench, was told once again to go. But he would not budge. Not he. "I am here in the performance of my legal right and duty, and I respectfully refuse to withdraw." So said Mr Bradlaugh, and he looked as if he meant it.

Thus openly defied, the Speaker called on the Sergeant-at-Arms to remove Mr Bradlaugh, and the Sergeant-at-Arms coming up the floor, close to him, Mr Bradlaugh cried out, nothing afraid, "I hope the House will not resort to physical force. When at the bar I shall only return again." The Sergeant, however, not heeding the threat, led him backwards to the bar, where he tried to wrench himself free, and still held in a tight grasp, dragged his captor once more to the table. He was now thoroughly roused. "I have come here," he shouted "to subscribe the oath according to law, and refuse to submit to the order." Meanwhile a posse of five messengers scampered in and carried Mr Bradlaugh ignominiously away. He struggled with all his might, but they were too many for him. They held him firmly—some by his arms, the others by his coat-tails—and it was with considerable difficulty that he was partly pushed, partly dragged off.

The unequal battle ended, Mr Speaker asked for "further authority;" and Sir Stafford Northcote declared that he only shrank from moving to commit Mr Bradlaugh to prison by the evident fact that the Government encouraged his misconduct. This Mr Gladstone denied, though at present he was "indisposed to interfere." He would wait and see what had best be done. As, however, no agreement seemed possible on that occasion, the House adjourned on the motion of Mr Joseph Cowen.

Next day, Mr Bradlaugh, who had been waiting in the lobby, slipped quietly in alone and unattended, and hurried up the floor to the table, looking curiously about as if to see whether a Testament had been laid down anywhere in that neighbourhood. He did not find one, however; the special copy of the Scripture in use

on the previous evening having been carefully removed out of his way. Then, looking from the table towards the Chair, where sat Mr Speaker on the alert, the person claiming to be sworn spoke half a sentence, a prelude to what would, if finished, have amounted to a demand to be allowed to take the oath. Mr Speaker, however, was too quick for Mr Bradlaugh, and, before that gentleman could disburden his mind, ordered him to withdraw below the bar. Continuing his former tactics, he refused point blank; but Mr Speaker had his eye on Captain Gosset, and that watchful official accepting the intimation, stepped up behind Mr Bradlaugh, got close up alongside, and touched him gently on the breast. The prisoner did not, as on the previous evening, attempt resistance, but retired meekly with his custodian to the bar, where the two stood side by side, full in front of the House. Mr Labouchere took this opportunity of asking Mr Gladstone, whether, to prevent a continuance of the "scenes," he would bring on the promised Parliamentary Oaths Bill. If he would do so, Mr Bradlaugh would refrain from further disturbing their proceedings. Mr Gladstone was, however, afraid that such a course might impede the Irish Land Bill, and he could not see his way to comply. After a time, Mr Bradlaugh whispered to the Sergeant, and the Sergeant returned the whisper, and Mr Bradlaugh, on his parole that he would not create a disturbance, took a seat on the cross benches, and the Sergeant retired for a spell of well-earned rest.

Although these periodical Bradlaugh interruptions undoubtedly amounted to a scandal, the House was not so deeply impressed with the solemnity of its own proceedings as to miss any, the slightest, opportunity for merriment. The matter having degenerated into a

party fight, the momentary discomfiture of one side became an excuse for laughter on the part of the other. Indeed, when that day it came to the turn of Mr Peter Rylands to enlighten the House, he could not have been more successful in eliciting hilarity, had the character of his humour been as conscious as it was otherwise. Mr Rylands was far from satisfied with the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition, whom he described, as on a former occasion, getting Mr Bradlaugh committed to prison, and the next day coming down in a trembling manner, "in a sort of white sheet," and like a penitent begging for his release. The "most unkindest cut of all" was, however, when Mr Rylands in the heat of the moment distinctly described the Leader of the Opposition as "the right Hon. Baronet the Member for Northampton." At this unwitting sally even Mr Bradlaugh's stern countenance relaxed into a smile, while the general laughter amounted to a guffaw. Whether or not Mr Rylands objected to the merriment he had occasioned did not appear, but, stretching an arm across the floor in the direction of the enemy, he cried out, "Do you want to keep out Atheists?" That was exactly what the enemy did want, and they replied in terms, or rather in the monosyllabic affirmative term, many times repeated. "Then," cried Mr Rylands, seizing his opportunity, "your present arrangements have not that effect." An observation of Mr Gladstone, made at an earlier hour, had been quite thrown away. Some Tory gentleman on a back bench had ventured to laugh while the Prime Minister was declaring that he did not mean to take upon himself the responsibility of the conduct of the Opposition, whereupon the right hon. gentleman looked sternly in the direction whence that laugh proceeded, severely and deliberately observed,

"Permit me to say that since yesterday evening, at nine o'clock, there has been a little too much manifestation of that sort."

It was proposed by Mr Bright, on behalf of the Liberals, and supported, that if Sir Stafford Northcote would undertake to bring in a short Bill, similar to that introduced by the Senior Member for Northampton last year, to meet Mr Bradlaugh's case and allow him to affirm, the House would be relieved from its difficulty. Sir Stafford, however, would make no such bargain, "not though it came recommended by the Prime Minister and by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster." It was apparent that the chiefs on both sides desired to be conciliatory; but, as with Mr Rylands to the right, so with Mr Hubbard to the left, subordinates kept the battle alive, and helped to embitter the discussion. Mr Hubbard was for making short work with "the candidate for Northampton, a troublesome and unauthorised intruder." What were the police for? Let a body of constables be called in and the obnoxious one be removed. Mr Hubbard was decidedly vexed. So the debate dragged on from hour to hour, sometimes dropping down to murmuring monotony, occasionally rising to unseemly uproar. In order to cause an irregular discussion to wear the appearance of regularity, a motion had been made by Mr Labouchere for the adjournment of the House. Under cover of that motion the leaders on both sides delivered speeches clouded in words of general import, from which it was yet possible to disentangle the meaning that each would try to tire out the other rather than make a motion for the committal of Mr Bradlaugh to prison, or otherwise fulfil the natural procession of logical ideas. Mr Chaplin wanted to know how it was that

Mr Gladstone, "a master of argument, of sophistry, and what he calls minutiae," would not help them to restore order and decency to the debate. But Mr Gladstone, adopting the suggestion of Mr Bright, would not "get them out of the hole."

The leaders having finally disburthened themselves, the House was left to comparative emptiness and the more or less enlivening oratory of the back benches. Mr Bradlaugh, with characteristic persistence, sat out the desultory debate, and soon after half-past three o'clock the Senior Member for Northampton asked leave to withdraw his motion for the adjournment of the House. But that did not stop the worse than useless talk. Several members suggested that legally Mr Bradlaugh was "as if he were dead," adding, "How, then, has he managed to rise again?" And the humour culminated when Mr Warton likened the Prime Minister to "the shepherd of the flock folding the ninety-nine lost sheep of the Liberal party."

The events above narrated took place on April 27th, and on the 29th of the month the Prime Minister gave formal notice that the Attorney-General would introduce a Bill dealing with the subject of the Parliamentary oath; and on May 2nd he himself moved: "That the orders of the day, subsequent to the order of the day for resuming the adjourned debate on the second reading of the Irish Land Bill, be postponed until after the notice of motion for the introduction of the Parliamentary Oaths Bill." But before that motion was made, Mr Mac Iver enquired of Mr Speaker "whether the Parliamentary affirmation, which had hitherto been incumbent upon those who conscientiously objected to take the oath, did not contain a solemn declaration of loyalty to the Queen and Constitution such as could not

reasonably be made by one who proclaimed himself to be an Atheist and a Republican; and whether in those circumstances, the introduction of a measure to substitute a mere formality for what was then a binding obligation, would not in itself be an abuse of the privileges of the House, such as should not be permitted in an assembly where every member had either taken the oath of allegiance or made a solemn declaration of like purport."

Mr Speaker, however, declined to commit himself to an opinion on Acts of Parliament which "every other member of the House was equally competent to construe for himself."

Lord Randolph Churchill, as usual, was among the first to object. Scarcely had the proposition to allow the Bradlaugh Relief Bill to be introduced by the Attorney-General escaped the lips of the Premier, than the noble lord sprang to his feet, made a rattling and threatening speech, stigmatising the proposed measure as "a concession to violence and mob law." It was part of an arrangement, he might say a bargain, which had been entered into between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy on the one part, and the two Hon. Members for Northampton on the other part, to place, *coute que coute*, Mr Bradlaugh in the House. But he and his friends did not mean to be bullied into undue haste in dealing with this matter. They were not frightened at the face of Mr Bradlaugh, although they were shocked at the prospect of that unbeliever "playing at romps with the Sergeant-at-Arms in the middle of the floor," and they did not mean to yield an hour earlier than could be helped to "brazen Atheism and rampant disloyalty." "Hear, hear!" shouted Mr Warton; and Mr Newdegate, grasping his famous crimson

Bandanna in his right hand, swayed backwards and forwards in his seat—joyful! elate!

Sir Stafford Northcote supported his young champion. "If," said he, "we were in danger of further scandalous proceedings, let the House take its proper course in dealing with them." Noting the temper of the moment, Mr Gladstone preferred to give way rather than to fight there and then, but not before he had complained, amid some groaning from the assembly, that they were keeping Mr Bradlaugh "from the exercise of his legal right."

To hear Mr Newdegate correct Mr Gladstone on a point of order was amusing, but it was better still to watch the sneer of the Prime Minister when he wondered how any man who had "sat in that House for forty years" should know so little of its procedure. It was better even than that to observe Mr Newdegate, when Mr Gladstone's back was turned, go up to the table, lay hold of the Standing Orders, consult with the Clerk, and having found the place, and discovered that both he and the Prime Minister were each as much right as wrong, carry the book back to his seat and point out the passage to his friends round about, and particularly to the young lord who on this particular evening perambulated in and out among the Conservative benches, whispering words of comfort to his supporters.

Mr Lewis, especially, stood up manfully for the "conscience of the country;" but finding himself interrupted by the Radicals, adopted the ruse, as he imagined, of moving the adjournment of the debate, and so securing to himself the privilege of defending the aforesaid conscience so long as his large store of breath might serve. It fell out, however, that the unaccustomed weight of the public conscience flurried Mr Lewis, and by a slip of the tongue he moved the adjournment of the House instead

of the debate. He desired to withdraw his words and to rectify his mistake, but Mr Speaker, a stickler for Parliamentary etiquette, was inexorable ; and the question being put was lost by an immense majority, leaving Mr Lewis a sadder, if not a wiser man.

Mr Gladstone's subsequent motion being then agreed to, the Attorney-General moved that the Speaker do leave the chair, so that he himself might, in a Committee of the whole House, bring in his Bill. That done, the debate was adjourned until the 6th of the month, and again to the 9th, when the Premier, finding that he could not make headway against the determined opposition, yielded ; and, consequently, the proposed measure was not proceeded with.

Finding his chances of relief by statute gone for the session, Mr Bradlaugh lost no further time ; and on the following evening planted himself under the Peers' gallery, where Captain Gossett's myrmidons buzzed about him like so many flies. Once or twice the Sergeant himself whispered a few words to the intending demonstrator, who kept his eyes on Mr Speaker as keenly as the messengers kept their eyes on him ; more keenly, indeed, for he, carefully selecting a moment of lax observation on their part, slipped away to the verge of the bar, and seemed as if he were endeavouring to secrete himself behind Dr Lyon Playfair, at that time Chairman of Committees, who stood there in readiness to carry up a report. Inasmuch as such a very large man as Mr Bradlaugh could not possibly hide himself behind such a very small man as Dr Playfair, the attempt at secrecy—if it were an attempt in that direction—failed, and Mr Bradlaugh was seen, like Saul in the Book of Samuel, standing a head and shoulders above—the members in the doorway.

Waiting, furtively eyeing the mace, and looking out, as it seemed, for a Testament, which might have been left accidentally on the table, Mr Bradlaugh stood on the alert, and while Mr Parnell was asking a question, ran rapidly along the floor, and appeared in front of Mr Speaker, with the golden crown of the mace standing in bold relief against his black waistcoat, and by contrast bringing out the paleness of his anxious face.

He spoke calmly, begging to inform Mr Speaker that, "pursuant of his duty, he had come there to take his seat." After an interval of slight confusion, Mr Parnell sat down, and Mr Speaker ordered Mr Bradlaugh to retire below the bar, which order having been, with some show of verbal amiability, disobeyed, Captain Gossett, who had prudently planted himself close by the gangway, came forward, and reaching up to the elevated position occupied by Mr Bradlaugh's right shoulder, looked upward into his side-face, as who should say, "You are my prisoner!"

Thereupon Mr Bradlaugh, now in custody, went backward, bowing until he reached the bar, whence he denied the legality of the proceedings. Then a shout of "Gladstone" rose from the Tories, and an answering cry of "Northcote" came from over-the-way. Mr Gladstone sat in the old position, his hands crossed listlessly upon his lap, making no sign; which perceiving, Sir Stafford rose, and, after a few preliminary words, moved that Mr Bradlaugh be turned out, and not allowed to come in again unless he would undertake to sit below the bar and keep there in peace and quietness. The leader of the Opposition described Mr Bradlaugh as "an incomplete member of this House."

After some fencing between the rival chiefs as to

whose duty it should be to lead the Commons on such occasions, the Prime Minister acquiesced in the proposition that Mr Bradlaugh be not suffered any more to disturb the debates, and the motion was put from the Chair. Instantly a crowd of Liberals scrambled out of the House in order to avoid the vote which the Radicals were at first anxious to have recorded. But in the end better counsels prevailed, and Mr Bradlaugh's temporary expulsion, according to the terms of the right hon. baronet's motion, was agreed to by common consent, amid that laughter which is seldom restrained in St Stephen's, even on serious occasions. A few moments later Mr Bradlaugh, with the Sergeant-at-Arms still by his side, was seen to pass out of the door, and across the tessellated pavement of the lobby into the shades beyond.

At the following sitting the Speaker read a letter from Mr Bradlaugh, protesting against the resolution of the previous day; and two days later Mr Labouchere explained that the electors of Northampton were willing to wait for a settlement of the question until the Irish Land Bill should be disposed of.

From that date until about seven weeks later, that is to say, July the 5th, the House was not troubled with Mr Bradlaugh or his grievance. That day he wrote a letter to the Speaker, intimating that he would come "at the time and in the manner he might think fit, to fulfil his duty;" and on the 24th it was announced that he would present himself on the 3d of August. He did seek admission on August the 4th, and with the result following:—Attempting to force his way into the House, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the messengers, and police turned him out. Mr Bright, speaking on hearsay evidence, complained that Mr Bradlaugh had been pushed into

Palace Yard, "with so much violence as to be reduced to a condition of deathly faintness." Lord John Manners retorted that, having been an eye-witness of the proceedings, he could say that Mr Bright had put "an inaccurate colour on the facts." And Mr Callan averred that, so far from Mr Bradlaugh having been in a fainting condition, "he was able to give the messenger as good a shake as ever a bull-dog gave a rat." On that occasion the House formally approved "the action of Mr Speaker and the officers of the House acting under his orders." And thereafter, until the end of the session, although several attempts were made to revive the scandal in debate, Mr Bradlaugh himself held aloof.

THE BRADLAUGH SCANDAL.

PART III.—1882.

AT the evening sitting of the opening day of the Parliamentary session of 1882, the Prince of Wales and a large number of peers looked down from their gallery on Mr Bradlaugh, while he appealed to an assembly, the majority of whose members had already made up their minds which way they would vote. From the very commencement of the proceedings the House was full to overflowing. Mr Forster, Sir William Harcourt, Lord Hartington, Mr Chamberlain, Mr Childers, Mr Bright, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr Mundella, and the law officers of the Crown tried the

capacity of the Treasury Bench ; and the leaders of the Opposition were also present, in force. It was, however, the theme of general comment that the Prime Minister did not appear in his place. Several new members having been introduced, amid partisan applause, and taken the oath and their seats, Mr Bradlaugh, who had been standing within the bar, watching his opportunity, came with hurried stride to the table. A faint Radical cheer which greeted his appearance having subsided, and just as the Clerk was putting some question to him, Sir Stafford Northcote began to propose a resolution almost identical with that of April 26, 1881. During the speech of the leader of the Opposition, the person most nearly concerned stood, his hands crossed in front of him, holding the rim of his hat, the crown thereof touching the crown of the mace. Having patiently heard his opponent to the end, Mr Bradlaugh, apparently as little affected as if all eyes had not been turned upon him, asked that he might be heard before the House came to any decision ; and, having said his say, on the old familiar lines, retired to a seat on a level with the bar, and proceeded coolly and methodically to arrange his notes.

Still Mr Gladstone was absent from his place. For a moment there was an awkward pause, and then the Home Secretary leaped bravely into the gulf. Scarcely, however, had he opened his lips to regret the "unavoidable absence of the Prime Minister," when a shout of laughter rose from the opposite benches, which said almost as plainly as words could have done, that the other side accepted the excuse but with considerably more than the proverbial grain of salt. Sir William, however, stuck to his text, declared that his chief had not expected the motion to come on until later ; and in

proof of his assertion, while he was yet speaking, the Premier entered and sat down behind his apologist. It was now the turn of the Liberals to cheer, and they did so vociferously.

Sir William Harcourt continued, and in moving the previous question contended at length that the House could not override the statute or prevent a member duly returned from taking his seat. It was for a court of law to settle the matter in dispute. Assuredly it was not the business of the House, he urged, to inquire into the opinions of a member presenting himself to take the oath. To all of which propositions the Conservative members objected by shakings of the head, murmurs, and explicit condemnatory exclamations.

Mr Speaker having duly put the "previous question," Mr Bradlaugh rose from his seat, but was forestalled by Mr Newdegate. That hon. gentleman gained great favour from the Opposition by a vigorous speech, in the course of which he begged the House "not to suffer the name of the Deity to be taken in vain." In his vehemence Mr Newdegate somewhat imperilled the safety of Mr Ritchie, who sat immediately in front of him; but that hon. member, by a series of well-timed duckings of the head, managed to escape unhurt. In order more forcibly to point his moral, the honourable member attributed the many changes of Government which had taken place in France since the period of the great Revolution, and the assassinations of Presidents Lincoln and Garfield in the United States, to the fact that the oath was not insisted on in the case of members of Parliament at Paris or Washington. In his enthusiasm, he frequently extended his right arm, with a gesture indicative of indignation, in the direction of the Premier, who sat with closed eyes and impassive countenance, as if unconscious of the incident.

Permitted to speak, Mr Bradlaugh did so, at first in tremulous accents, and from the corner opposite the seat of the Sergeant-at-Arms. Soon regaining his self-possession, he categorically denied most of the statements, to his detriment, made by Mr Newdegate. Though not in expectation that any word of his would gain a vote, yet he denied having said that he looked on the oath as a meaningless formality. Indeed, "if allowed to swear, he should consider it binding on his honour and conscience." Thereupon the Conservatives laughed derisively, and Mr Bradlaugh lost his temper. "I am," he cried, "pleading as a quasi-criminal at this bar. If you are unfit to be judges, don't judge. Either the seat is mine by law, or it is not mine. Remember that it has not been vacated." Continuing with unfaltering fluency, and making the most of every interruption—and there were many—he went on to argue his case with rhetorical ingenuity. Reiterating his former assertion that an oath was binding on his honour and conscience, mocking laughter once more proceeded from the benches to the left of the Speaker. "Members of this House," he shouted violently, "who are ignorant of the honour and conscience—" But he was not suffered to finish the sentence. His voice was drowned in cries of "Withdraw!" Turning upon his opponents, he exclaimed, "These are my judges!"—and the cries having subsided, he added, as if he meant to conclude his previous sentence—"of the man who stands before them." The House, ever ready to forgive an orator for the sake of what seems like an ingenious afterthought, allowed him to proceed; but he soon gave them occasion for renewed interruption. If they would not listen to him, he thundered, "a greater voice outside—" That was enough, and more than enough.

His opponents would not be threatened, and he, seeing his mistake, with great readiness added, "will make themselves heard at the ballot-box, as they are constitutionally entitled to do." Increasing in fervour with every succeeding period, he defended his past conduct in detail, the scene of excitement increasing as he went on. Thus adjuring, persuading, threatening, the orator enlisted every device of the platform in favour of his almost hopeless cause. In pleading accents he went on to speak of his own unworthiness to represent "the great constitutional principle" involved. "I want," he moaned, "to obey the law;" and, in conclusion, proposed that if the leader of the Opposition would withdraw his resolution, he himself would peaceably retire from the House for any reasonable length of time in order that a Bill might be brought in to substitute an affirmation in lieu of the oath. Were that request granted, he would be willing that the Act should only affect the future. Confident of the result, he would apply for the Chiltern Hundreds, and once more present his claims before the electors of Northampton. Otherwise he would not cease to trouble the House with his importunities. The grave alone should make him do that.

In spite of the undeniable cleverness of Mr Bradlaugh's appeal, it failed to elicit much sympathy even from his avowed supporters; and presently, by a curious coincidence, while his cause was being defended with all the arts of casuistry from the Treasury Bench, the clock above the door suddenly stopped.

Mr Bradlaugh's colleague in the representation of Northampton having supported his suggestion of a compromise, Sir Stafford Northcote refused to enter into any such bargain. The position of the Conserva-

tives, urged the leader of the Opposition, was one which honour and conscience alike made it impossible for them to give up. At length Mr Gladstone rose to speak in defence of Mr Bradlaugh's claim to be allowed to take the oath at the table, alluding to him as "the Hon. Gentleman the Member for Northampton." He defended the "previous question" as peculiarly applicable to the matter in hand: and that motion being put to the vote was agreed to by a majority of 58, in a House of 414 members. Sir Stafford Northcote's resolution was then put and agreed to; and, that done, Mr Bradlaugh, nothing abashed, hurried up to the table. On being requested by the Speaker to withdraw, he refused, contending that the House had exceeded its authority. Thereupon the Speaker, frankly admitting that he had no power to act in the matter, asked for the authority of the House. Silence ensued, broken by cries of "Northcote! Gladstone!" Finding the Premier passive, the leader of the Opposition took upon himself to move that Mr Bradlaugh be ordered to withdraw. Mr Gladstone did not oppose the motion, and "the Hon. Gentleman the Member for Northampton," after a few words of protest, backed toward the door, and passed out beyond the precincts of debate.

The Government refusing to declare the seat vacant, Mr Labouchere, on the 21st of February, moved for a new writ. Then came the climax to all previous "scenes." Mr Bradlaugh, who had been lolling upon the cross benches that afternoon, suddenly rose, ran nimbly up to the table, and went through a form of swearing himself in. The House was thrown into a state of dire consternation. In order, however, that what took place may be fully realised, it will be best to tell the story from the beginning.

To do Mr Bradlaugh justice, it should be said that he had made no secret of his intention to snatch the oath by a surprise. Indeed he had informed his followers that he meant to do so, and asked them to leave the details of the plan to his choice and discretion. There might be a struggle, he told them, but it would not include a tussle between himself and fourteen members of the police force and officers of the House, that being the number of persons, according to his account, engaged in a former stand-up fight in the lobby.

Before five o'clock in the afternoon of February 21st, and in a full house—a large majority of the members of the Government at that time sitting on the Treasury Bench—and with Mr Bradlaugh, as above stated, comfortably ensconced under the peers' gallery, Mr Labouchere moved: "That Mr Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a writ for the election of a member to serve in the present Parliament for the Borough of Northampton, in the room of Charles Bradlaugh, Esq., who, by the resolution of this House on April 26, 1881, and February 7, 1882, respectively, has been prevented from taking the oath prescribed by law for a member to take before he can sit and vote." Mr Labouchere argued the case at length, and in conclusion appealed to hon. gentlemen opposite for their support of "a constitutional act."

The proposer of the resolution having resumed his seat, Lord Randolph Churchill submitted an amendment implying that Mr Bradlaugh was disqualified by law from fulfilling his obligation to the constituency of Northampton. Some applause followed, although at this period of the evening the House seemed to be in a calm and judicial, it may even be said indifferent, frame

of mind. Following the noble Lord, Mr Attorney-General, with lawyer-like precision of phraseology, dilated on the nature of the oath, contending that the House ought not to act in a narrow, bigoted spirit, "punishing a man for his religion's sake." He was opposed equally to the motion and to the amendment. It might have been observed that while the Attorney-General continued speaking, Mr Bradlaugh leaned anxiously forward, resting his arms upon the rail in front of the cross benches, scanning the House furtively, and he was, if possible, still more suspiciously alert, when Sir Hardinge Giffard intimated that if Mr Labouchere's motion were the result of an arrangement between the two members for Northampton, Mr Bradlaugh should be heard by himself or by counsel at the bar of the House. "Yes," said Mr Labouchere; "the motion was made with Mr Bradlaugh's wish and at his desire. Having disqualified a member, it became the duty of the House, at the earliest opportunity, to issue a new writ." Sir John Mowbray, however, went even further, and suggested that it was no use taking half-measures. If the House meant to expel Mr Bradlaugh they should do so once for all; a sentiment which met with ready acquiescence.

At this juncture the sitting member for Northampton left his place to engage in a whispered conference with his colleague below the bar, and several legal members having spoken as to the correct interpretation of the statute, Colonel Makins put it pointedly to the Speaker whether there was anything in the resolution which created a vacancy in the representation of Northampton. Mr Speaker was not, however, to be drawn into any expression of opinion. He informed the hon. and gallant member that the point at issue was rather for

the judgment of the House than for the decision of the Chair. Mr Newdegate, however, had no such scruples against plain speaking. It was manifest to him that Mr Bradlaugh's sitting and voting in the House was illegal—a somewhat inconsequent inference, seeing that Mr Bradlaugh, since his latest return, had neither sat nor voted. Sir Stafford Northcote admitted the difficulty of the situation, but thought the new writ should not be issued at the present time. In his opinion what had transpired was a strange proceeding altogether. So indeed the event proved, for the question being then put it was discovered that the House had negatived the latter part of Mr Labouchere's resolution, and had likewise negatived Lord Randolph Churchill's amendment to leave out the word "who" to the end of the question, in order to add the words, "is disqualified by law from taking his seat in this House." The words now left for the consideration of the House consequently ran as follows:—"That Mr Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a writ for the election of a member to serve in the present Parliament in the room of Charles Bradlaugh, Esq., who—." What was to be done with the superfluous "who"? The Commons roared with laughter. Mr Labouchere proposed to leave out the "who," Lord Randolph Churchill as strenuously objected, and finally the House filled for a division, the word "who" being left part of the proposition. Just then Mr Bradlaugh came down from his seat, and, gently pushing aside an honourable member to the left-hand corner of the bar, stood with white face and anxious gaze, his body slightly strained forward like that of a foot-racer waiting for the flag to fall. The time, however, was not yet ripe, and upon the Chamber being cleared he returned reluctantly to his place.

In due course, after a slight delay in finding Lord Kensington, one of the Government tellers, the division was taken. Only eighteen voted that the seat was vacated, while 307 went into the lobby against the motion. Now at length had come Mr Bradlaugh's eagerly-sought and long-coveted opportunity. Hon. gentlemen were settling into their places, laughing and talking together, as is their wont at such times, and amid the general hubbub his presence was overlooked by all but a very few, who suspected that something out of the common was about to happen. Stepping hurriedly down from the cross benches, Mr Bradlaugh ran smartly along the strip of matting, keeping close to the front Liberal bench below the gangway. In a moment all eyes were turned upon him. Honorable members, taken completely by surprise, expected that he would address them. They were mistaken. At first he did not speak, but dipped his right hand suddenly into the left-breast pocket of his frock-coat, pulled out a small dark, octavo volume, with red edges, which he transferred to his disengaged hand, made a second dive and brought forth a piece of white paper, made a third dive and drew from his waistcoat pocket a stump of pencil; and, amid exclamations of astonishment not unmingled with groans of derision, "gabbled" through a form of words, inaudible above the din of dissent, kissed the little book, tossed it behind the crown of the mace, attached his signature to the piece of paper, and with unparalleled effrontery held it up in the direction of the Chair, at the same time calling out in a high-pitched triumphant tone, "I tender that as the oath, which I have taken according to law;" and just as the Clerk reached the corner where he stood, deposited it beside his private Testament upon the table, retired below the

bar, returned and took a seat on the Radical benches. Extraordinary as was the scene, it had in it more than a slight element of the ridiculous. There were some manifestations of contempt, but the prevalent sentiment seemed to be one of unbridled mirth. The very daring and impudence of the act evoked peal upon peal of laughter.

Seeing Mr Bradlaugh so seated, the Speaker called upon him to withdraw below the bar. Thus addressed, staying only to remark that he would obey, but that having taken the oath, he would now take his seat, he backed again toward the door, bowed low to the Chair, and presently facing about, ran up the steps of the gangway which separates that part of the Chamber from the cross benches, and dropped into a vacant seat within the body of the House. Cries of "Order, order!" arose from the Opposition, but the Government and their supporters remained imperturbable. Mr Speaker, however, was not to be trifled with in that manner. "The hon. member," said Sir Henry Brand, in accents of offended dignity, "has not carried out my instructions, which were that he should withdraw below the bar." Mr Bradlaugh replied brusquely, "I did obey your instructions and went below the bar, and have now taken my seat in pursuance of law, having taken the oath prescribed by law." Supported by shouts of "Shame, shame!" Mr Speaker as instantly resented the unaccustomed rudeness, and insisted that Mr Bradlaugh should go below the bar and remain there, which was tardily done.

Instantly Lord Randolph Churchill moved for a new writ for Northampton, on the ground that the offending member had "sat in the House without having taken and subscribed the oath according to law." The noble lord, treating his motion as a question of privilege, asked

the House to affirm that the seat was vacant, as if Mr Bradlaugh "was dead." The Attorney-General, on the other hand, suggested a more cautious procedure. As the case now stood it should, he thought, be settled in a court of law, an opinion in which Mr Labouchere fully concurred.

But, inquired the noble lord, how were they to know that Mr Bradlaugh's book was a New Testament and not a copy of "The Fruits of Philosophy"? It was insanity on his part to suppose that such a pretence of complying with a most sacred and solemn form would be accepted in that place. It was a deliberate insult to the House. Matters had by this time come to such a pass that the Prime Minister found it advisable to intervene with a suggestion that the question was one for calm deliberation and dry discussion. If the House had been insulted why did not the noble lord make a motion to that effect? They were competent to expel a member who had insulted them. He and his colleagues had been taken by surprise, having been completely in the dark as to Mr Bradlaugh's intention. At the same time an act of disobedience on the part of an hon. member did not necessarily vacate his seat. Government wanted a little time to consider what course it might become their duty to take. Nothing should be done in haste, nor anything calculated to lead to repentance in the future. He then formally proposed the adjournment of the debate until the next day.

Mr Gibson supported the motion, though deeply indignant at the "scandal and outrage" which had been witnessed. Complaining of the tone adopted by Ministers, he demanded to know, with unconcealed scorn, whether the course of conduct pursued by the Hon. Member for Northampton was calculated to recommend him to the

consideration of the House? Dr Lyons reiterated the charge of scandal and outrage, and proposed, as an amendment to the Premier's motion: "That Charles Bradlaugh, in tendering himself to take an oath which he declared to have no binding effect on his conscience, is guilty of profanation, that he hereby is declared incapable of sitting in this Parliament, and that he be forthwith discharged from further attendance."

Between the making of Dr Lyons' motion and the temperate speech of Sir Stafford Northcote counselling moderation, and calling on the Government to take some step to vindicate "the outrage inflicted on the dignity of the House," and asking whether the Government were prepared to resent the insult of Mr Bradlaugh, thrice repeated, Lord Randolph Churchill stepped jauntily up to the table, whence he carried off the piece of paper from which Mr Bradlaugh had repeated the words of the oath. Returning to his place the noble lord examined the document curiously, and afterwards it was passed from hand to hand for inspection until it reached Mr James Lowther, who flung it contemptuously from him. Mr Gladstone meanwhile laid hold of Mr Bradlaugh's little book, which proved to be not what the Member for Woodstock had suggested, but a neat copy of the "Revised Version." A sight of the sacred volume, put to such a surprising use, appeared to afford satisfaction to the several right hon. gentlemen on the Treasury Bench; and, in spite of Mr O'Donnell's counsel, that neither "the book" nor "the piece of paper" should be preserved, lest some further legal quibble might arise, Mr Bradlaugh's historical copy of the Scripture did, as a matter of fact, mysteriously disappear from its conspicuous position near the mace. Mr Callan having delivered his conscience of the opinion

that Mr Bradlaugh was "a blasphemous infidel," and Sir Richard Cross having extracted from the Premier a promise that the Government would consider the course to be taken next day, the lamentable proceedings terminated with a notice of motion by Mr Warton to omit from the amendment all the words after "that," and to insert the words, "that the conduct of Charles Bradlaugh in pretending to take and subscribe the oath is a wanton insult to the House and a defiance of the resolution of Feb. 7, 1882, and that for such conduct he be committed to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms."

On the resumption of the debate next day, the Prime Minister, while admitting that Mr Bradlaugh's conduct constituted a case "of repeated and flagrant disobedience," suggested that, from the offender's point of view, he might be doing nothing more objectionable than asserting the right of his constituents. He, himself, desired to say that though the Government would support the Chair against disobedience, they would also be content to follow the course adopted by them in the past, and leave further active interference to the initiation of the majority; an announcement which was received with general surprise and some show of indignation. Even Mr Bradlaugh's avowed friends appeared bewildered; and there resounded the familiar cry of "Northcote! Northcote!" notwithstanding that at the moment Ministers were present in strong force. Mr Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt, Mr Childers, Lord Hartington, Sir Henry James, Mr Chamberlain, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr Dodson occupied seats on the Treasury Bench. Captain Hayter and Mr Herbert Gladstone sat upon the steps of the gangway, and other members of the Government hovered about the Speaker's chair. Sir Stafford at once acceded to the

demand; and after a few words of formal protest, moved to add to Lord Randolph Churchill's motion an amendment which would have had the effect of preventing Mr Bradlaugh from "coming within the precincts of the House."

Conservative, Liberal, Radical, and Home Rule members now put in a claim, all at once, to be heard, and in turn were listened to with more or less attention. Mr Labouchere's argument was decidedly the most cogent. He contended, in the unconventional, colloquial style, peculiarly his own, that Mr Bradlaugh had to make a choice of evils, and he had selected that course which appeared to him to present the fewest drawbacks. There was nothing in the Standing Orders obliging a member to have the oath administered to him; and if there was a Sessional Order refusing his colleague the oath, then the one militated against the other.

Lord Randolph Churchill, frankly indignant at the lukewarmness of the Opposition leaders, denounced Sir Stafford Northcote's tactics as "a milk-and-water policy," quite inadequate to deal with Mr Bradlaugh's "scandalous and profane mummery." The noble lord's amendment, however, being negatived without a division, Sir Stafford's amendment was put as a substantive motion. Dr Lyons then proposed an amendment thereto, in words formerly adopted by him, that Mr Bradlaugh "had been guilty of profanation and should be discharged from further attendance on Parliament."

While the Attorney-General and Sir Hardinge Giffard were endeavouring to explain "the legal aspects of the situation" from opposite poles of inference, Mr Bradlaugh, smiling serenely, came in and took a seat on the

cross benches, holding a slip of paper conspicuously before him. His appearance, though not unlooked for, was disquieting in the extreme, and the suspicion that he meant mischief was quickly confirmed by Mr Labouchere informing the House that his colleague had asked him to request "that he be heard at the Bar." At sound of the question up sprang Mr Montague Guest, close by Mr Labouchere, and inquired of him "whether hon. members were to infer that Mr Bradlaugh did not now claim to have taken his seat last night?" This, though an ingenious interpolation, failed of its intention. Turning upon his interlocutor, the gentleman to whom the query was addressed replied—in accents "child-like and bland"—"In legal matters I never make any admission." Probably to stay the somewhat irregular conversation, Mr Speaker here interposed, with the suggestion that Mr Labouchere "might, if he pleased, move that Mr Bradlaugh be heard at the Bar; and the House would signify its pleasure."

The great majority present forthwith roared out their refusal; and during the hubbub Mr Bradlaugh came and sat quietly down within the precincts of debate. Half a dozen Conservatives rose as with one accord, and with them rose the Speaker. The right honourable gentleman suggested to Mr Bradlaugh that he had no right there. "Yes, sir, I will claim my right," replied Mr Bradlaugh, as with arm outstretched, and, grasping his slip of paper, he tried what shouting would do. His strident tones were, however, immediately drowned in a yet noisier uproar.

When silence was restored, Mr Speaker again called the attention of the House to the repeated disobedience of "the Hon. Member for Northampton in disobeying the order of the House and the instructions of the Chair

by coming within the Bar." There were now tumultuous calls of "Gladstone! Gladstone!" But for a time the Premier did not move. Presently he rose, simultaneously with the Speaker, who said: "Before the right hon. gentleman addresses the House, I must call on the Hon. Member for Northampton to remove below the Bar." And going in the direction indicated, Mr Bradlaugh took occasion to observe: "I do that, sir, in obedience to your directions, but I claim my right to sit here"—motioning with his hands to the body of the Chamber. His manner was at this time subdued almost to tameness. He was evidently suffering from the effects of protracted nervous excitement.

Mr Gladstone, having resumed his seat in deference to the Chair, would have remained inactive, had not the demand to hear him been again imperative. "If I understand the case," he said, "there is not at the present any question of resistance to your authority, sir. Obedience has been, although reluctantly and slowly, yielded to your injunction. We have before us at this moment a motion which will protect the House from a reiteration of the offence. Therefore I do not think it necessary for me to make any other motion."

That statement, however, did not coincide with the plan of the Opposition; and Sir Stafford Northcote proposed to withdraw the motion, which stood in his name, in favour of one of expulsion, pure and simple. Although Mr Bradlaugh's supporters murmured dissent, the suggestion that he should be expelled was on the whole acclaimed. The proposal had evidently been well considered, for not only had the motion been previously written out *in extenso*, but had been passed from hand to hand along the front Opposition Bench for approval and confirmation. Dr Lyons having been persuaded to

give up his amendment, and Sir Stafford's proposed words being negatived, the House was asked to vote that "Charles Bradlaugh, Esq., one of the members for the borough of Northampton, having disobeyed the orders of the House, and having, in contempt of the authority of this House, irregularly and contumaciously pretended to take and subscribe the oath required by law, be expelled this House." And he was expelled accordingly by 291 to 83 votes, the latter number including his own vote, which he insisted on recording.

That afternoon yet another new writ was granted for Northampton, and the expelled of Parliament again appealed to his constituents, who re-elected him, within eight days, by a majority of 108. He polled 3796 votes to 3688 recorded for his Conservative opponent, Mr Corbett; and within four days once more troubled St Stephens. But he was not permitted to take the oath, the House re-affirming the Resolution of February 7, 1881.

Mr Bradlaugh frequently listened to the debates from the cross benches, and his affairs cropped up several times among the business of the House during May and June; and on the 22d of the latter month occurred the last of the scenes of 1882.

Within a few minutes of the Speaker taking the chair on the day named, Mr Bradlaugh walked nimbly up to the table, holding a roll of paper in his hand. A few members smiled, others appeared deeply shocked, fearing some new manifestation of disobedience. Mr Speaker, himself, jumped up with much more than his usual alacrity, at the same time calling out "Order! order!" and peremptorily bidding the intruder to withdraw. Mr Bradlaugh, however, held his ground, replying, "I am here, sir, in pursuance of my right to

present a petition to the House, and I claim my right as a member to present that petition." But the roused Speaker would not be defied. "The honourable member," said he sternly, "not having been sworn, has no such right." And he added with studied coldness: "He will now withdraw." Mr Bradlaugh hesitated—looked round at the silent, unsympathetic array—then, bowing ceremoniously to the Chair, he faltered out, "In obedience to your ruling, sir, I withdraw, claiming my right, however, to present this petition." So saying he carried his roll of paper to a seat under the Peers' gallery, and was no more heard within the people's chamber during the third session of the present Parliament.

Although Mr Bradlaugh did not appear in person again until the following year, the House heard from him in the autumn session, through a letter to the Speaker, written from his lodgings at 20 Circus Road, St John Wood, and dated "11th November 1882." In that letter, which did not lead to anything at the time, Mr Bradlaugh said, that having been expelled he had been re-elected, and that he had not since presented himself at the table for the purpose of taking his seat. In order to avoid the appearance of conflict with the House one of the electors of Northampton had brought a friendly suit against him; but the High Court of Justice had formally refused to hear it. Would the Speaker therefore permit him to be heard at the Bar that he might state his grounds of law?

And with unconscious irony Mr Bradlaugh subscribed himself the Speaker's "most humble and obedient servant."

THE BRADLAUGH SCANDAL.

PART IV.—1883.

DURING the session of 1883, Mr Bradlaugh made several ineffectual attempts to be admitted to all the rights and privileges of a member of Parliament. He wrote to the Speaker on February 15, intimating his intention to come to the table and take the oath. But when the letter was communicated to the House, Mr Labouchere undertook, on his behalf, that he would await the result of the promised Parliamentary Oaths Amendment Bill. After some preliminary objections had been disposed of, the Bill, backed by the Attorney-General, the Marquis of Hartington, and Sir William Harcourt, was introduced, but the debate on the second reading was four times adjourned, and on May 3 was put off for six months—a proceeding identical with its rejection. Mr Callan, an Irish member, and a conspicuous opponent of Mr Bradlaugh—who remained in his seat below the bar while the division took place—brought in the first news of the result, declaring it in a loud and exultant voice. Great cheering greeted his words, and it was some time before Mr Rowland Winn, one of the tellers for the majority, was able to announce the figures—289 against 293—showing that the second reading was lost by only three votes. Honourable gentlemen jumped upon the benches, waving their hats—one member flinging his hat in the air. Altogether the hand-clapping and hurraing lasted several minutes.

Mr Bradlaugh immediately wrote to the Speaker, asking to be called to the table at the proper time, with two members to introduce him, for the purpose of

taking the oath required by law; and should the Speaker find any difficulty in taking that course, he respectfully asked to be heard in support of his claim. The Speaker declining to act without instructions, Mr Bradlaugh came on the following afternoon, and the House signified its pleasure to hear him at the Bar.

At first he spoke amid a profound and depressing silence, and with evident effort. No sound of approval encouraged him to proceed. But afterwards, growing excited and withal impressive, he was frequently applauded from all parts of the House. He asked indulgence on the ground that his position as an unsworn member had been one of "considerable pain." By the privilege of an unsworn member he had been "within hearing of everything that had taken place; but by the practice of the House had been precluded from offering the smallest dissent to any phrase, however severe, to any insinuation, however harsh, and to any charge, however much he might think it to be false." His constituents had chosen him three times, and if he were as vile as some members had described him, if that vileness imposed no legal disqualification, no one within the House, he urged, had the right to challenge his return. The law required him to take his seat. It imposed penalties if he did not take it, and gave him privileges which he ought to enjoy. For the House of its own act to reject him was "treason to the Constitution." He then proceeded to defend his opinions and past life at length, denying the accusations of "Socialism" and "Communism" which had been brought against him. "The law," he said, "gives me a seat; in the name of the law I ask for that seat. I regret that my personality overshadows the principle involved in this matter; but I would ask those who

have touched my right, not knowing it, and have found for me a vice which I do not remember in the memory of my life—I would ask them whether they can afford to cast a stone, or whether condemning me justly for my unworthiness, then as just judges they will vacate their own seats, having deprived my constituents of their representative.”

Some fencing between Mr Bradlaugh’s well-wishers and the Conservative and Irish opposition ensued, but before the conclusion of the sitting it was decided, on the motion of Sir Stafford Northcote, that he “be not allowed to take the oath.”

For two whole months Mr Bradlaugh remained quiescent, so far as Parliament was concerned ; but on July 9 the Prime Minister read a letter from him declaring his intention to disregard the resolution of the House as “invalid and illegal,” and to take his seat. That communication resulted in an order to the Sergeant-at-Arms to exclude him until he should engage not further to disturb the proceedings of the Assembly.

The seatless member for Northampton has brought two actions at law against officers of the House ; the first against the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr Erskine, for assault on the occasion of his expulsion in August 1881, and the second against the Sergeant-at-Arms, Captain Gossett. In both cases the Attorney-General was empowered to act for the defence. The history of those suits does not come within the scope of these pages.

To enumerate, much less to repeat, the mass of arguments adduced during the discussion of the ill-fated Parliamentary Oaths Act Amendment Bill would be a waste of time. Indeed, the meaning and intent of days and nights of ingenious and occasionally eloquent ob-

jections may be summed up in one sentence of Sir Stafford Northcote: "To pass the Bill would give the appearance of a personal triumph to Mr Bradlaugh."

THE BRADLAUGH SCANDAL.

PART V.—1884.

WHATEVER the public or individuals may think of the justice or the propriety of Mr Bradlaugh's claim to disturb the House of Commons session after session, he himself is persuaded of his right, and does not scruple to enforce it to the uttermost. Indeed, only a few days prior to the opening of Parliament on February 5 last, he frankly told his constituents that in the event of his exclusion from the precincts of debate he should return from day to day and destroy the peace of his enemies. Fortunately, as the sequel shows, he took a more legitimate and becoming course.

On the eve of the session he contributed the following manifesto to the columns of the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—

JUSTICE FOR NORTHAMPTON.

By MR CHARLES BRADLAUGH, M.P.

"As another scene in the constitutional struggle is imminent, and as misapprehension of the facts is general, and mis-statement not infrequent, I ask your leave to submit for public judgment my version of the

facts as they stand, and of the grounds on which I claim public support in the course I take. I am one of the duly elected burgesses for the borough of Northampton, returned for the third time on the 2nd of March 1882 to serve in the present Parliament. Elected at the General Election, my first election was voided after I had sat and voted for more than five months. This was because I had so sat and voted on affirmation, the Courts deciding that I was not entitled to affirm, but, to use the words of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords, was 'bound to swear my allegiance.' My second election, on the 6th April 1881, was vacated by my expulsion on the 22nd February 1882, because—following in this particular the precedents of Baron Rothschild and Mr Alderman Salomons—I, taking with me a written form, personally took and subscribed the oath at the table. No proceedings were taken by the Conservatives to test the legality of the oath thus taken, although they had at once instituted legal proceedings to test the validity of the affirmation taken on July 2, 1880. The vote I gave in the division lobby on the 22nd of February 1882 is duly recorded in the journals of the House, having been specially reported by the tellers. My third and last election was on the 2nd of March 1882. Its legality is questioned, and the certificate of my return has been duly issued by the Clerk of the Crown. On the journals of the House of Commons I have since been repeatedly described as 'the member for Northampton.' Mr Speaker has read several letters from myself to the House, which are entered on the journals of the House as from the member for Northampton. In the cloak-room a hook and tape are provided for my coat and stick, under my name, as for other members. In the lobby I am pro-

vided with a special locker for my papers. In the vote office printed bills franked and posted there by me pass free of postage because I am treated as a member. I enter the House itself, through doors which are only opened to members and to special officials of the House. When the House is cleared for a division, I remain in it, Mr Speaker and myself being the only members who do not vote. The officer of the House, during session, brings daily to my lodgings all parliamentary papers and the orders of the day. I have been deprived, however, and my constituents are deprived, of my right to speak and vote by an order of the House of the 6th of March 1882, renewed on the first day of last session, by which I have been prevented from doing that which the law says I must do, and which since my election on the 2nd of March 1882 I have always been ready to do, in exact accordance with the statute and with the Standing Orders of the House.

"It is asserted that the House cannot assent to the oath being administered to me, or being taken and subscribed by me, because it is alleged that in consequence of some opinions held by myself such an oath would not be valid within the meaning of the statute. It would have been easy, within the twelve months after February 21, 1882, to have had this point tested by a judicial decision; but the courts held that this cannot be done in a friendly suit, and none other has been brought. It would still be easy to test the matter at law, if the objection be honest, for after I have again taken and subscribed the oath, and taken my seat, and given one vote, I could be sued by the Attorney-General, and, as such a proceeding could be ripe for judicial decision in some three or four weeks, I have no doubt that I could get the consent of my constituents to

abstain from further sitting or voting until the court had given judgment. Personally my position is one of exceeding difficulty. My constituents trust me, and desire me to hold the seat. I desire to serve in Parliament, and believe I can be useful as a legislator. A majority of the House objects to my presence, but apparently has not the desire to take away my right to sit, which it could do in one of two ways. The House could take away my right to sit, by simple resolution, expelling me, and thus vacating the seat. This would refer the matter to my constituents, to whom I should appeal for re-election. Or, the House might pass and send up to the Lords a bill declaring me disqualified from being elected or sitting, and if that bill passed into law then, so far as I am concerned, the whole question would be settled, and Northampton would no longer be half disfranchised. But the House does not do either of these things; it leaves me the legal right to sit, and therefore leaves me the moral duty to try to do all things the law requires to enable me to take my seat. Some members have spoken as if I ought to rest satisfied in being left with the various privileges which even my position as an unsworn member gives me. But this I cannot and will not do. I was elected by the men of Northampton to the duties of a legislator, not to the privileges of a club-house. It is said that any attempt by me to take my seat will hinder public business. But the blame of this rests with those who, having no legal objection to my sitting and voting, rely on illegal and forcible hindrance to prevent me. Among the few Liberals who have aided the Conservatives by joining in the resolution against me, there seems an opinion that I had at some time or other refused to take the oath of allegiance. This is not so;

when I claimed to affirm, I was, as Hansard will show, perfectly silent as to the oath. It is added that I have declared that the oath of allegiance would not be binding upon me ; and when I quote the words of my answer to the second Select Committee on June 2, 1880 (Question 102)—‘ Any form that I went through, any oath that I took, I should regard as binding upon my conscience in the fullest degree. I would go through no form, I would take no oath unless I meant it to be so binding,’—it is replied, ‘ But, as a witness, the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, declares the witness oath not to be binding on you, and, as a witness, you have often affirmed, accepting that enactment.’ But here, again, my antagonists ignore my answer to the same Committee (Question 101), in which I fully explain the distinction between the testimony oath and the promissory oath of allegiance, and they overlook the fact that the courts have decided that the Evidence Amendment Act, 1869, does not apply to the Parliamentary oath. If it did I should be entitled to affirm.

“ On the 5th of February I shall take my seat among members as a member, but—because I have not taken and subscribed the oath—unable to speak or vote ; on the 11th, I shall, as now arranged, present myself respectfully, my certificate of my return in my hand, ready in all things to comply with the law, entitled to take my place as one of the Commons of England, and I appeal through you to public opinion that justice may be done to Northampton.”

Mr Bradlaugh arrived at the House of Commons at one o'clock, on the day of February 11, and so escaped the intended greetings, friendly and otherwise, of the crowd which assembled outside Palace Yard,

later in the afternoon, in hope to see him arrive. It is understood that after an interview with Sir Henry Brand, he adjourned to the library, and there waited. Prayers over he came into the House, and took his accustomed seat under the gallery. The general arrangements for the demonstration had been agreed upon between Mr Rowland Winn, the Conservative Whip, on behalf of the leader of the Opposition, and Mr Labouchere, as Mr Bradlaugh's "next friend."

There were forty-four questions on the paper that day, and, consequent on the great excitement which prevailed in connection with the state of the Soudan, and the probable fate of General Gordon, several extemporary queries were addressed to ministers, thus prolonging the suspense of the chief actor in the coming scene.

Business began, as usual, at four o'clock, and at a quarter past five, Mr Bradlaugh came down from his position under the gallery, and stood just behind the line which defines the "bar," bolt upright, shoulders squared, left foot slightly to the front, and arms dangling straight down, loosely by his sides. Although suffering from a slight pulmonary disorder at the time, his outward appearance was much the same as that already described, at length. Five sessions of intense excitement do not seem to have aged him an hour.

Presently Mr Burt came and stood at his left hand, and, shortly after, Mr Labouchere took up a position on his right, in front of a small knot of members congregated in the doorway—Mr Bradlaugh standing a full head and shoulders taller than either of his introducers.

He was pale, excited, and restless, in dread of a repetition of the scene when he fought with the officials

of the House, and—so he says—nearly lost his life in the encounter. Looking now to this side, now to that, and anon in front of him, he wiped his hot and fevered lips and brow with a large white handkerchief, played nervously with his eye-glasses, took from his pocket the certificate of his return for Northampton, passed it from one hand to the other again and again, and stood, as the slow minutes lagged, straining for the opportune moment to make a dart forward to the table.

At exactly six minutes to six, seizing the instant when the questions had come to an end, he ran up to the mace—bending from the middle, in obeisance to the Chair, his large black coat-skirts flapping outwards—Messrs Burt and Labouchere doing their best to keep up with his long, hurried strides. Then his companions retired, leaving him alone—"the observed of all observers."

First of all, Mr Bradlaugh deliberately took from the left breast-pocket of his coat, a small thin volume, bound in dark leather; and, reaching across the crown of the mace, laid it down lengthwise upon the despatch-box. He then more hurriedly took from the same pocket a small white paper on which was written the words of the oath, and the blue foolscap sheet of his Return. Holding the papers in his right hand, with his left he then took the book from the table, recited the words of the oath—in a voice inaudible only a few yards off—put back the little book in its place over his heart, felt in his waistcoat pocket for what appeared to be a stylographic pen, signed the white slip, unfolded the blue one, which he laid, with the other atop, upon the despatch-box, waited while the Speaker addressed him, and then making a hasty retreat backward, scurried up to his place under the gallery, and,

having put his hat on, smiled upon the shouting and groaning assembly. While Mr Bradlaugh was going through his well-rehearsed performance, Mr Speaker stood up in front of the chair, at first demanding "order," afterwards a silent witness of what Mr O'Donnell stigmatised as a piece of "blasphemous buffoonery."

Sir Henry Brand, though "unused to the melting mood," was visibly affected. His voice trembled, and his words came slowly and disjointedly as, with Mr Bradlaugh within a few feet of him, he said :—"Mr Bradlaugh, you have come to the table without being called upon by me according to the rules and orders of the House, and have gone through the form of taking and subscribing the oath in your own way, without any of the prescribed forms as if you had been duly sworn. I must call upon you to withdraw until the House has considered your conduct and the position you have assumed."

Within a couple of seconds of Mr Speaker's remarks and Mr Bradlaugh's withdrawal from the table, Sir Stafford Northcote was seen standing opposite Mr Gladstone—leading the House. As usual with him, his manner was entirely unimpassioned :—"I need hardly say, Mr Speaker," purred Sir Stafford, pleasantly, "that if the leader of the House desires to rise I will give him the opportunity ; but, assuming that he does not, I intend to do so, and as I see no indication of his intention to do so, I shall call the attention of the House to the position in which we stand. It appears to me that the proceeding which we have just witnessed on the part of Mr Bradlaugh, is not in the nature of taking the oath in accordance with the statute prescribed. Of course it is necessary that the oath should be taken when you are in the chair ; and at the moment when the form

was gone through you were not in the chair—you were standing on the step and you were calling the hon. gentleman to order. Under these circumstances, I understand that the matter is entirely open to us. I therefore propose this resolution, which is the same that has been moved and carried for several sessions of Parliament: 'That, having regard to the resolutions of this House of the 22d of June 1880, 26th April 1881, the 7th February and 6th March 1882, and the 4th May 1883, and the reports and the proceedings of two Select Committees therein referred to, Mr Bradlaugh be not permitted to go through the form of repeating the words of the oath prescribed by the statutes 29 Vic. cap. 19, and 31 and 32 Vic. cap. 72.'"

Both sides laughed unreservedly at the allusion to the Premier's backwardness in coming forward, and when Sir Stafford sat down Mr Labouchere rose, but resumed his seat, when in answer to prolonged cries of "Gladstone!" the Prime Minister came slowly, and apparently with reluctance to the table, took hold of Mr Bradlaugh's Return and oath, moved them aside to the other end of the box, and looking sadly upon Mr Speaker, while a loud cheer rang through the Chamber, said: "I think it is right I should follow the right hon. gentleman. The right hon. gentleman has acted with perfect courtesy. There was no indication of an intention on my part to address the House or occupy its attention. It was a serious question, when first the Government found themselves, unhappily, placed in a state of difference with the House, whether they ought or ought not, as the servants of the House; to take the initiative in giving effect to the resolution at which the House arrived, but of which the Government disapproved. But the position was taken by us, and we have adhered

to it for several years, and I think the House will feel that for us to recede from that position now would be totally without dignity on our part and not likely to give satisfaction to anybody. It is much better that the right hon. gentleman who represents on this occasion the judgment of the majority of the House should guide the House in this matter. We listen to what he says in an equitable and candid spirit. The right hon. gentleman has given us his construction—he has put his own construction—upon the act which has just been performed by Mr Bradlaugh, the member for Northampton, and I will give my reasons why I do not follow him in placing any construction whatever upon it. It has been discovered in the course of these proceedings that if Mr Bradlaugh should sit and vote in this House so as to raise the question of penalty, that question could not be effectively raised at the issue of a private individual. That being so, the question occurred to us whether it would not be our duty, on the part of the Crown, to raise that question in a court of justice should the case arise. Our impression is that it would be our duty so to raise the question, and it might then become the office of the Court to declare whether Mr Bradlaugh had taken the oath or not. On that account, I think it is the much better way that I should avoid giving any opinion on that subject. There is another view of the case with which we have to deal. The right hon. gentleman has made a motion with regard to which now I say, as I have admitted on former occasions, that it is fair and legitimate and consequential on the previous decisions of the House. My own opinion on that decision remains exactly as it was. I believe that almost the vast majority on this side of the House regard the decision as unconstitutional. For my own part, as an

individual, speaking with submission, I do not see in what way it is divested of the character of being contrary to law. But, sir, that is not the question. It is not the function or duty of the Executive Government, differing from the House of Commons on a particular point, again and again to dispute the decision at which the House has arrived. I recognise that the right hon. gentleman, having induced the House to come to a decision, is bound in consistency to take certain consequential proceedings which are or may be necessary to prevent the order of the House from being disturbed by acts which are irregular and contrary to rule. On that account, although I may not be friendly to any part of these proceedings, I shall not be the person to take the initiative in any opposition to the motion of the right hon. gentleman. Last year we had a division upon the subject which I deprecated, but in which I felt compelled to take part, feeling as I did that for the Executive Government, who represent the Crown in this House, to avoid the difficulty of a division by retiring from the House is not a mode of proceeding that can be considered satisfactory. But unless there is reason to suppose that some great change has taken place in the House, I certainly would venture to express a hope that the right hon. gentleman may be permitted to work out his way without a division. I regard this as a mere question of order, and I do not think it ought to be mixed up with any other question. And looking at it in this light, I think the division which took place last year was somewhat injurious, because it was not a real expression of the opinion of the House upon the original question, and the consequence was that a much smaller number of hon. members opposed the motion than have opposed it when the question of principle was

fairly raised, and on that ground I see no advantage which can be gained by repeating a division of the kind. I hope the hon. gentleman, the senior member for Northampton, may be inclined to save the House that trouble. The House will feel that the right hon. gentleman has a right to work out the principle which he has laid down, and while we shall respect the decision at which the House may arrive, we cannot undertake any initiative in the matter."

Notwithstanding that the Premier was frequently encouraged from his own side during the delivery of his speech, it closed amid a silence most remarkable in the case of a great Minister habituated by long custom to "the tumult of acclaim."

Mr O'Donnell having objected to Sir Stafford raising the question on a different issue than whether Mr Bradlaugh had been guilty of a breach of discipline, Mr Labouchere invited Sir Stafford to withhold his hand until a court of law should decide the legality of his friend's proceeding. At that polite and ingenious suggestion the leader of the Opposition vigorously shook his head, whereupon Mr Labouchere declared that he should be driven to take a division, as the right hon. gentleman's motion "would cover the entire session." He then proceeded with provoking coolness to expound his view of the state of the law and the value in his eyes of the declaration which followed the oath. Those words were to him "an utterly and absolutely unmeaning form." To him they "were just the same superstitious incantation as the trash of any mumbo-jumbo among African savages."

It must not be supposed that the sitting member for Northampton was permitted to utter his sceptical sentiments without protest. Some members heaved sighs

loud and deep, a few smiled, and many groaned. But he went on as unconcernedly as though he had merely recited some long-accepted truism. When, however—it may have been inadvertently—Mr Labouchere blandly denied that there could be “in any way two measures of truth,” laying emphasis on the last word, the member of Parliament seemed to be lost in the popular editor, his lax theology was forgotten, if not forgiven, and the House broke out into genial laughter. Nevertheless, his quotations from Jeremy Bentham on the sanctity of an oath angered Mr O'Donnell especially. “Was there no rule,” demanded the elect of Dungarvan of Mr Speaker, “to impose decency” upon the hon. member. But Mr Labouchere was not to be interrupted without making reprisals, and he quickly turned the laugh against Mr O'Donnell by mockingly referring to him as “a great judge of what is right and proper in this matter.” Then, turning upon the Fourth Party, he twitted them with having raised a cry against his colleague in order “to waste the time of the House.”

Interruptions now became the order of the evening, and Mr Labouchere was up and down every minute. Lord Randolph Churchill would not tamely submit to the charge of wasting time, and a wrangle went on, during the progress of which Mr Bradlaugh—sitting under the gallery rubbing his hands together with delight—was scarcely referred to. Mr Labouchere had already made a long speech when admonished from the Chair to confine himself to the question, which he did by reiterating his thrice repeated arguments, and concluded in these words:—

“Now, assume that Mr Bradlaugh very possibly will be elected at the next General Election, there is nothing that can prevent him coming up to the table among the

first forty members and taking the oath. If, then, he is able to do that, because you have refused to alter the law and pass an Affirmation Act, surely you cannot say that you are actuated by any desire or feeling in the cause of religion to prevent irreverence, because by your act you have obliged Mr Bradlaugh and every other person who entertains his views with regard to religion to take the oath before sitting in this House, whereas the Prime Minister and members of the Government were anxious that he should be allowed to fulfil his constitutional duties by taking an affirmation. That is the reason why I say that what I may really call the sanctimonious sophistry of this hypocrisy has been clearly understood by the country. I have not the slightest doubt that Mr Bradlaugh will find himself in a minority on this occasion ; but you may depend upon it that in the end he will beat the House of Commons, because the House of Commons is in the wrong. It is merely the creature, and behind Mr Bradlaugh is the people of England. We shall see who wins in the end. I do not say this from any feeling of affection or regard for Mr Bradlaugh individually, but assuming if you like that Mr Bradlaugh is the vilest man, in attacking the rights of the vilest of men you attack the rights of the most noble of mankind. It is not a question of Mr Bradlaugh individually. I am not raising the question of Mr Bradlaugh's personality for a moment, but I say the constituencies are fully determined when they elect any one who is a duly-qualified person to see that he shall not be prevented from taking his seat in this House and from fulfilling his duties."

While Mr Labouchere was speaking, the Clerk took possession of Mr Bradlaugh's papers. It happened therefore that when Lord Randolph Churchill, on the

ground that they would be required as exhibits in the action to be brought against that gentleman, suggested that the documents should be replaced for the inspection of members, Mr Speaker expressed himself as satisfied with the safe custody. Lord Randolph likewise declared that "no oath had been taken and no testament kissed,"—the little book, safe in Mr Bradlaugh's pocket, to the contrary.

Mr Forster was angry with Mr Labouchere for the irreverent tone of his speech, yet he would vote with him. Mr Newdegate was equally angry, but would vote against him, and Mr Healy was angry because Mr Bradlaugh having been ordered to withdraw would persist in continuing to smile from the place which Mr Healy described as "an enjoyable nook." He had himself already been suspended three times, and "the same thing might happen again." Would he be allowed to retire to the "enjoyable nook" aforesaid? And if Mr Speaker pleased, would he kindly "name" Mr Bradlaugh? No, Mr Speaker would not name him. Indeed the President was not prepared to say that Mr Bradlaugh had even taken his seat in the House. How then could he be "named?"

Sir Stafford Northcote having once more explained the objections so frequently urged by him on behalf of the Opposition against Mr Bradlaugh's coming in by the door of the oath, a section of the Parnellites took advantage of the opportunity to contrast the action of the Speaker in this matter with the treatment accorded to them on occasions when they had been required to withdraw from the Chamber, noisily and arrogantly demanding that no difference should be made in the case of an individual protected by the Prime Minister. In vain did Mr Speaker endeavour to show that there

was no analogy to be drawn from two sets of facts having nothing in common. The Parnellite section, aided and abetted by Lord Randolph Churchill, Lord Claude Hamilton, and other influential Conservatives, endeavoured to prevent Mr Bradlaugh from sitting under the gallery or taking part in any of the divisions bearing on his exclusion. Mr Healy went so far as to declare that the Government were in collusion with the seatless member, and that in permitting him to vote they were only preparing the ground to bring a mock action, through their Attorney-General, against him. He desired that the House should give the Courts no data to work upon, should give "Bradlaugh & Company no base of operations."

Mr Sexton suggested that Mr Bradlaugh should be directed to withdraw during the division on Sir Stafford Northcote's resolution. But as the matter was not pressed, Mr Bradlaugh went out and voted with the Noes, an act which Lord Crichton, one of the tellers, duly reported to the House. Not waiting for the formalities connected with the division to be completed, Mr Healy immediately moved that Mr Bradlaugh's name be expunged. Another lively wrangle ensued—the Attorney-General maintaining that expunging the name would not affect the legal question of whether Mr Bradlaugh had or had not voted.

Mr Storey would have had Mr Bradlaugh once more heard at the Bar. But fortunately the proposition fell through. That gentleman can have nothing new to say. The quarrel raged for a long time, until, out of sheer weariness and exasperation, Mr Lyulph Stanley was shouted down while trying to explain something more or less pertinent to the enquiry; and the interpellated division being taken, Mr Bradlaugh's vote was

disallowed by a large majority; and on the delayed announcement of the numbers resulting on Sir Stafford Northcote's motion, Mr Bradlaugh was excluded by 280 to 167. This raising of a fresh debate and taking a division thereon while a subsequent division was still pending, is without precedent in the modern annals of Parliament.

Mr Bradlaugh's friends then begged hard that he might at least be allowed the use of the library and dining-room, undertaking that he should not disturb the debates, but the conquerors were determined to shut him out entirely. They laughed at the bare idea of accepting Mr Bright's assurance that "his word might be relied on." In the moment of triumph they were not disposed to spare their fallen enemy the full measure of indignity. Another vote was taken, and again they secured a victory. Mr Bradlaugh had, however, gained his point. He had voted in each of the three divisions, thereby rendering himself liable to three penalties of £500 each. That same night he applied for, and was next day granted, the Chiltern Hundreds. Again he appealed to the electors of Northampton, and was again elected. Who shall say what will be the end of the Bradlaugh Scandal?

CHAPTER IV.

AN AMBASSADOR INSULTED.

"COMING events cast their shadows before." An act of Ministerial imprudence, causing a scene of commotion on the night of June the 14th, 1880, probably had more to do with the imposition of the Clôture than we are likely to learn until the secret history of that innovation comes to light. There had been signs of obstruction in the previous Parliament, but nothing to compare with what occurred in 1881 during the stormy debates on the Coercion Bill, culminating in the memorable forty-one and a half hours' sitting, the wholesale expulsion of Parnellites, and the Speaker's New Rules.

On that mid-summer's evening, four years ago, Mr Frank Hugh O'Cahan O'Donnell, the representative of a mere handful of electors at Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, Ireland, fought and, for the time being, conquered Mr Gladstone and all his available chivalry. The Member for Dungarvan for once found staunch allies in the Conservative ranks, led in person by Sir Stafford Northcote; and warm sympathisers even among the Radicals, ordinarily the Premier's most sincere and faithful followers. This was the first angry attempt to control the freedom of debate by force, and the House promptly resented the proposed gag. Three years previously it had been agreed that a member twice pronounced out of order and disregarding the authority of the Chair, should render himself liable, on a vote

taken without discussion, to suspension during the remainder of a debate in a full House, or proceedings in Committee. But from beginning to end of that evening's acrimonious wrangle it was never once seriously pretended that Mr O'Donnell by his question had transgressed the rule of order.

The hot-headed member for Dungarvan was, even at that time, something more than an energetic, erratic member of the Home Rule Party. He had constituted himself champion of the Roman Catholic Church in Parliament, and mouth-piece of the enemies of the French Republic. Consequently when M. Challemel Lacour, an enthusiastic Gambettist, was appointed Ambassador for France at the Court of St James's, the Romanist party all over Europe were up in arms; and, true to his self-imposed trust, Mr O'Donnell put a question on the notice paper of the House which should not have been allowed to appear. Here is the insulting query, which, through an error of judgment on the part of the Speaker, led to the turbulent scene: "Mr O'Donnell to ask—Is M. Challemel Lacour, spoken of as future French Ambassador to England, the Citizen Challemel Lacour, who, as one of the Prefects of the Provisional Government of September 4, 1870, ordered the massacre of Colonel Carayon Latour's battalion, in the telegram "*Fusillez-moi ces gens-la*," contained in the Report of the Commission of the National Assembly on the subject, and who has since been condemned in a Court of Justice in France to pay some £3000 compensation for his share in the plunder of a convent during the same period?"

The atmosphere of Parliament, like the weather outside, was electrical that night. Over London and the suburbs a dun sky lowered, harbinger of the tempest of

wind and rain which afterwards raged out of doors. Clouds of whirling dust obscured the streets and roads, and a hot and heavy air prevailed inside the Chamber; but the physical languor thus produced was to be of short duration. Mr O'Donnell's vexatious question soon created an exciting uproar. Unfortunately there was no power forthcoming on either side, like that described in Addison's famous Ode, to "ride the whirlwind and direct the storm." As the wordy quarrel continued, hour after hour, confusion only seemed to grow worse confounded. The Chamber, which later on became inconveniently crowded, was not at first more than ordinarily full; and, though a goodly array of Ministers sat from the first upon the front Ministerial bench, the Head of the Government did not come in until after the proceedings had commenced. From the moment, however, when the tempest of talk fell the galleries filled, and even the place allotted to the Peers had not a seat to spare. Foremost among the contingent of hereditary legislators, spectators of the scene, sat Lord Sherbrooke. The noble lord, at one time Member for the University of London, seemed, his elevation notwithstanding, as if unable to effect a bodily severance from the Lower Chamber—seemed, indeed, as if he could have desired that the coronet of a Peer were compatible with a seat and a voice in the House of Commons. Once during the sitting Lord Frederick Cavendish and once Lord Hartington entered the Members' Gallery on the Opposition side, and surveyed the struggle raging below.

Before it came to the turn of Mr O'Donnell to put his question, formally, and in reply to an enquiry of Mr Otway, Sir Charles Dilke, at that period Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, said that the President of the French

Republic had requested to be informed whether Her Majesty would receive M. Challemel Lacour as French Ambassador in this country, and Her Majesty had intimated her readiness to do so. Thereupon Mr Monk rose to the point of order, and asked the Speaker whether it was competent for an honourable member to attack the appointed Ambassador of a foreign power by means of a question to a Minister of the Crown? To which the Speaker replied that Mr O'Donnell had given notice of his question altogether on his own responsibility. Mr Speaker, adopting his usual formality of expression, was "bound to say" that the honourable member would have been better advised if he had consulted the Chair on the subject. At the same time he was not prepared to declare that the question was irregular, or that circumstances might not arise that would render it in order. He had not deemed it right to interfere with the question because it seemed to him due to the French Ambassador that an equal publicity should be given to the refutation of the reflections contained therein. The honourable member's proper course would have been to give notice that on an early day he would move an address to the Crown on the subject of the appointment.

Then, coming from his seat close by to the table, Sir Charles Dilke laid his right hand solemnly upon the despatch box, at the corner, by the gilded crown of the mace, and said in measured language and tones of great gravity, pronouncing each word separately and distinctly, that there never was such a massacre as that referred to; that M. Challemel Lacour denied ever having used such a phrase as that attributed to him; that he was never called on to pay damages as suggested.

At every clause of the denial the Liberals cheered and cheered again, and many tokens of approval came from the opposite side. Nevertheless, undeterred and undismayed, calmly defiant, Mr O'Donnell would not recede from his position. He persisted that M. Challemel Lacour had ordered the massacre, but that his order had fallen into the hands of a French officer of high character, and that was the reason why it had not been executed.

Instantly the Speaker realised the extreme difficulty of the situation, and with calm dignity protested against the honourable member abusing the privilege of asking a question in order to bring a charge of such gravity against a foreign Ambassador. So thought the House, and it cheered the Speaker accordingly. Mr O'Donnell, however, would not budge, not even for Mr Speaker. He would, he said, amid manifestations of intense excitement, confine himself to the fewest possible words. He had given three days' notice of the question—but at this critical point he was interrupted by Mr Gladstone. The features of the Prime Minister were set, and his voice was calm, as, waiting until the cheering had subsided, he moved, without further ado, that Mr O'Donnell "*be not heard.*"

Had a cannon-ball fallen through the glass roof the surprise and astonishment of those present could hardly have been more profound. There was a moment's pause, and then Mr Parnell, cool and collected, interposed in defence of "the freedom of speech." Disclaiming sympathy with the terms of the question, he pointed to the enormous importance of Mr Gladstone's proposition, and to the rashness of such a course, now for the first time adopted. It was "an evil and dangerous example." And as Mr Speaker rose as if to address the House,

the member for Cork moved the adjournment of the debate—a motion which was received with condemnatory shouts. The Irish members were, however, apparently not entirely in accord; and in the language of Dr Thomas Parnell, sometime Archdeacon of Clogher, a minor poet of the Queen Anne period, and, it may be, an ancestor of Mr Charles Stewart Parnell:

“The chief retires, the crowd the challenge hear,
And proudly swelling yet perplexed appear.”

All the same Mr Parnell did not long lack a seconder, inasmuch as Mr T. P. O'Connor, with youthful impetuosity, rushed to the support of his leader. Once more Mr Gladstone interposed, this time with an endeavour to put the issue at stake clearly before the House. He contended that Mr O'Donnell ought not to raise the question without notice. Mr Sclater Booth asked whether the speech of Mr O'Donnell were not contrary to the rules of debate, and if so, would the Speaker propose to put the motion that the hon. gentleman be silenced? Now came the turn of an impetuous Home Ruler, since retired from the Parliamentary arena. Mr A. M. Sullivan viewed the question of the hon. member for Dungarvan with surprise and regret. He was one of the humblest members of that House, and the Prime Minister, the most eminent man in office in the kingdom, but, for all that, he thought the position taken up by the Government alike dangerous and untenable. As a stranger in the gallery, and years before he was a member of Parliament, he had heard Lord Palmerston do what it was sought to punish Mr O'Donnell for repeating. To suffer the motion to pass would be to narrow the privileges of debate.

Then, from a place under the gallery, the most backward situation below the gangway on the Liberal side,

proceeded the Northumbrian "burr" of Mr Joseph Cowen, Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, speaking with the simple eloquence begotten of the chivalrous defence of an absent man. It was not just, he said, under cover of a question, to bring a charge which amounted to a gross libel upon a prominent politician whose appointment would shed lustre on the country he represented ; " an ambassador distinguished in position, a man of letters and accomplishment."

Mr O'Connor Power, like Mr O'Donnell, a Home Ruler, but of a more moderate type, followed Mr Cowen, and while he was arguing in a similar strain to that adopted by the English Radical, Mr O'Donnell broke in with an intimation that he wished to direct the attention of the Government to a point concerning which he would ask them to reply on a future day. At this juncture, although the turmoil had not reached its height, it required the closest attention in order to follow the varying aspects of the scene.

Mr Newdegate and Sir Stafford Northcote now rose together, and though chief and loyal follower seemed for a few moments to dispute the floor, the choice of the Chair naturally fell on the leader, who, while regretting that the question should have found its way into the paper, thought that if it were within the Rules of the House that the Member for Dungarvan could, under the circumstances, be put to silence, that would constitute a serious infringement of the rights of debate. What was Mr Speaker's deliberate view of the case as it stood ?

This was, indeed, a swashing party blow, aimed at the Treasury Bench. The leader of the Opposition had taken sides with the questioner, and the Government were, from that moment, as good as beaten. At least there was an end of any show of unanimity, between the two great legitimate parties, to put before the country.

Thus pressed, and while again condemning the impropriety of Mr O'Donnell's question, Mr Speaker frankly admitted that such a motion as that of the Prime Minister had not been made in that House for 200 years, adding, "At the same time, I doubt whether such a proceeding as that which took place before the motion was made to-night has occurred for a similar period." Afterwards he stated that there were instances of a like motion having been made in the 17th century.

Scarcely had those pregnant words escaped the lips of the highest authority on Procedure in the Commons House of Parliament, when a cheer, all but universal, loud and long, rent the air. Neither side would suffer that their time-honoured privileges should be curtailed. They were, almost all of them, jealous of the usurpation of supreme power, even at the hands of the leader of the majority. Nor did Sir William Harcourt mend matters when he taunted the leader of the Opposition with having rendered valuable and influential support to the Member for Dungarvan. At his words, and still more at his tone of cold and measured sarcasm, the angered House rose in revolt. Would he withdraw? they cried. No; he had nothing to withdraw. So he said, as standing at the table with hand on hip, and head raised in attitude of defiance, he confronted the storm. Again and again he essayed to speak, but his voice was drowned in a disapproving uproar. He managed, however, to ask the leader of the Opposition whether he was "prepared to prevent the utterances of gross charges against the accredited Ambassador of a foreign power, or not?"

A momentary silence ensued, during which Captain Price, a Conservative, turning the tables on Ministers, had the happy audacity to move that "the Home

Secretary be no longer heard." The motion was seconded by Mr Gorst ; but the Speaker, not deigning to notice the facetious interruption, Sir William Harcourt jumped up again, and excitedly called out that he was "not to be silenced by clamour." A foreign Ambassador was entitled to protection from libellers in that House as elsewhere. What, he demanded to know, would the leader of the Opposition have done under similar circumstances to those in which Mr Gladstone had acted with promptitude? If the other side had nothing to suggest in lieu of what had been proposed, then they were enabling Mr O'Donnell to proceed. During the course of Sir William Harcourt's speech, several members rose to order—among them Sir John Lubbock, who said there was no question before the House. Sir Stafford Northcote was of opinion that the matter should be allowed to drop, a cool suggestion which raised a hearty laugh. That would not do at all, interposed Mr Forster, on behalf of Ministers. The speech of the Member for Dungarvan was contrary to "the decencies of society." Alas! there was another bad shot, and the Speaker ruled that Mr Forster was out of order. Having withdrawn the offensive expression, the Irish Secretary proceeded to speak for "the order and decency of debate." If Mr O'Donnell would say that his statements had given the House an impression different from that which he intended to convey all might be forgiven and forgotten, otherwise it was for the House to decide whether he should be heard any longer or not.

Mr O'Donnell, however, was not to be dealt with after that easy, off-hand fashion. With irritating coolness he taunted the Home Secretary with his temporary eclipse after the Oxford election, "and the mutual arrangement of a respectable couple which had brought

him back to the Chamber." And this mocking allusion to the self-immolation of Mr Plimsoll scored a laugh for the relentless Irishman. In a long and rambling speech he reopened all the disputatious matter, tried to justify himself, and ever and anon turned angrily upon the lately-elected Radical members, whom he designated as "young Liberal lions." Yes, despite of the Treasury Bench he would uphold his right, and if he was proved to have erred in his duty to Parliament or the Queen, there was the Bar of the House, and he challenged the thunders of the Ministerial majority. He should persevere in his questions in due course, and he believed the result would amply justify the action he had taken in the matter. Who was to blame? Not he, but Ministers! He "had spoken as an Irish subject of Her Majesty, but he trusted her British subjects would equally repudiate the interpretation which 10,000 tongues in all the Courts of Europe were placing on the condescension of Her Majesty's Government towards the dominant faction in France."

Unconsciously it may be (and, to adopt a homely phrase), Mr O'Donnell had "let the cat out of the bag." He was making himself the mouthpiece of the "ten thousand tongues"—more or less—"in all the Courts of Europe." No wonder his courage was untameable. No one, at that moment, more fully realised the meaning of the scene, which he, single-handed, had evoked.

As one possible way out of the difficulty Mr Shaw proposed that the motions, both of Mr Parnell and the Prime Minister, should be withdrawn, and Mr O'Donnell allowed to continue his statement. Mr Newdegate supported the Government, and Mr Willis would doubtless have followed at length on the same tack had the House

been in any humour to attend to a fruitless attempt at forensic oratory. Following Mr Willis's love's labour's lost, came Lord Hartington, with a declaration that the House ought, before coming to a decision, to understand what was the nature of the vote about to be taken. With warmth of manner and logical precision combined, the noble lord defended his chief. In opposing the motion of Mr Gladstone they would be voting for the attack of Mr O'Donnell. Difficult emergencies called for desperate remedies. But he was not allowed to pursue that strain. Ominous cries of "Cæsarism!" "Despotism!" warned the astute debater to desist from further irritating the already profoundly displeased assembly.

Doubtless, in the legitimate hope of putting a stop to a truly shocking exhibition, the white-haired, courtly Lord John Manners now pleaded gently for the adjournment. For a little while there was comparative quiet, but the uproar soon began again, and continued with varying force through the speeches of Mr Meldon, Sir John Mowbray,—who remarked that Mr Gladstone had been "a little precipitate,"—Mr Courtney,—who dreaded to "resuscitate a precedent of most awful potency,"—and Mr O'Shaughnessy, the last of whom referred to the precedent cited by the Speaker as having arisen during "the infamous reign of Charles II." While Mr O'Shaughnessy was yet speaking, Lord Hartington and Mr Childers engaged in earnest conversation. Meanwhile, amid the hubbub, it was as much as half a dozen successive members could do to make themselves heard. There were continued cries of "Divide!" "Vide!" The more hon. gentlemen appealed to Mr O'Donnell to accept the demands of Ministers the more persistently he shook his head by way of protest. At

length the House divided on the motion for the adjournment of the debate, and the Government secured an empty victory with 106 votes in a House of 387 members.

Ministers had gained nothing worth winning. They had not put Mr O'Donnell to silence. They had not laid the tempest. And when Major Nolan, the Home Rule Whip, proposed "the adjournment of the House," the Prime Minister seemed for the first time to grasp the fact that the only way to retrieve his well-meant blunder would be by a proffered compromise. In accents of genuine concern he asked that the Member for Dungarvan, who had quitted the Chamber, might be sent for, and that, pending his return, what he had to say might be repeated to him. After some delay Mr O'Donnell came back, and Mr Gladstone, in his most persuasive, most gracious, and least resistible manner, begged him to say that he would, if allowed to proceed, confine himself to what he proposed to bring forward on a future day. "I did not," said the Prime Minister, "ask that the honourable member should be ruled out of order. I rose to order, because I believed I was justifiable in point of order. There must be in every assembly an ultimate power, to be exercised only in extreme cases, over its own members for limiting the course of discussion, and limiting in a way that the mere guardian of its rules cannot have the power to do. If the honourable member will confine himself to giving a notice, the matter, so far as I am concerned, is at an end, and I shall be the first to ask to be allowed to withdraw the motion." And though the leader of the Opposition followed on the same lines, pleading with the Member for Dungarvan to relieve the House from its difficulty, that honourable gentleman continued

obstinate ; replying, politely but firmly, that he was in order, and "would not yield one jot of the common rights of the House." As might have been expected of him, Mr Biggar did not abstain from an irritating intervention. Partly in earnest, partly in a spirit of apparent wilfulness, and in his well-known, mocking, grating voice, he called on the leader of the House to confess he had done wrong, and ask permission to withdraw the motion, unconditionally, that his honourable friend "be not heard." And Mr T. D. Sullivan, among the most irrepressible of the Parnellite faction, narrated, in farcical, bombastic style, how he had seen, in the illustrated papers, pictures of the right honourable gentleman at the head of Her Majesty's Government, wielding an axe for a useful purpose. "But," said the all too fluent orator, with unconscious humour, "the Prime Minister will look very ill when wielding the rusty, old, obsolete implement which he is about to reintroduce for the purpose of politically cutting off the heads of members of this assembly." Mingled ironical cheers and laughter followed this ridiculous sally, and the Speaker seizing the occasion, put the question.

This time only fifty-eight O'Donnellites voted for the adjournment.

On the numbers being announced Lord Elcho (the present Earl of Wemyss) once more moved the adjournment of the debate. Matters were evidently growing more and more serious. Mr Gladstone was observed in council with the Speaker. Sir Stafford Northcote expressed himself as still hopeful that something might be done to pacify Mr O'Donnell. And if that was impossible, would the Prime Minister, he desired to know, so alter his motion as to make it refer to this particular case, in order to avoid establishing "a dangerous precedent"?

Mr Gladstone rejoined that he was not unwilling to compromise, but first they must dispose of the motion for adjournment.

Meanwhile the protracted party squabble had become a disgraceful faction fight. Mr Gorst of the Fourth Party trenchantly assailed the Treasury Bench. Mr Forster exclaimed that "the House ought not to be disgraced," and Mr O'Donnell was cautioned by the Speaker to mitigate the rancour of his tongue. He was "taking a course which was almost an offence to the Chair." For all that, when the Irish Chief Secretary shouted out that he "absolutely denied" some more than ordinarily strong language of Mr O'Donnell, Mr Speaker interposed on behalf of that honourable member, to the effect that he "was in possession, and might proceed with his address to the end of it." Once again Mr Parnell interposed, and yet another division followed, with 97 for the adjournment — 68 members having retired from the clamorous scene since the first division was declared.

Mr Gorst ingeniously suggested the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into precedents. Mr Walter recommended the adoption of a New Rule, to the effect that a vote on the adjournment should be taken without discussion. The Prime Minister, however, though pallid with the long vigil, would not consent to the Committee. As he now understood Mr O'Donnell, that gentleman intended to confine himself to giving notice of the question he intended to put, "in terms such as those usually employed in giving a similar notice;" and on that assurance he was willing to withdraw his motion.

At this welcome, though tardy, announcement, there arose the sound as of one great sigh of relief. Mr

O'Donnell handed in his amended question, and the eight hours' wordy, wasted battle closed in silence and dejection.

What took place on the following Thursday proves to demonstration that the unseemly wrangle might easily have been averted. The House was again crowded. The Opposition mustered all their available talent in expectation of the unforeseen, and the Government had brought up the full strength of their forces.

Mr O'Donnell's elaborate query stood thirty-third in a paper of thirty-eight questions. It was his desire to ascertain—at least so said the notice paper, for the questions were never asked—whether the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs would take steps, through our Ambassador at Paris or otherwise, to obtain for the information of the House a copy of that part of the deposition of General Bressolles (volume iv. of the “*Enquête Parlementaire sur les actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*”) in which that officer is reported as giving his evidence upon a written order, “*Fusillez-moi ces gens-la,*” received by him during the administration of M. Challemel-Lacour at Lyons, on the occasion when Colonel Carayon Latour's battalion of the Mobiles of the Gironde, quartered at Vénissieux in the Department of the Rhône, removed a red flag which had been publicly displayed: and whether he would take steps, through our Ambassador at Paris or otherwise, to obtain for the information of the House copies of the judgment of the Appeal Court of Dijon, delivered on the 21st of January 1879, confirming the judgment of the Court of Lyons in the case of the Christian Brothers of Caluire against MM. Challemel-Lacour, Vassel, and others, in a demand for compensation for loss and damage suffered in consequence of the

seizure and sale of personal effects and expropriation of landed property in virtue of written orders of those gentlemen.

The clock pointed to a quarter past five when Mr O'Donnell rose, and in his most deliberate manner explained to the assembly that he had given in another question besides the two printed on the paper, a question which the Speaker had decided to be contrary to the rules of the House, and which had been suppressed. Turning towards the Speaker he asked, point blank, the reason why he had interfered in the matter. The reply came on the instant. There was not a second of suspense. The occupant of the Chair, rising and looking round the House, answered, in tones subdued, but clear and melodious, that he had done so because the question was irregular and irrelevant. Pressing the matter with native persistency, Mr O'Donnell wished him to define what part of his question might be considered irregular. With impressive dignity, Mr Speaker replied: "I am responsible to the House for the maintenance of the rules and order of the House. The question which the hon. member was prepared to put adverted to a matter beyond the cognisance of the House, or the Queen's Government, and on that ground I would not allow it to appear on the paper."

Before Mr O'Donnell could bandy further words, Sir J. Mowbray rose to the point of order whether it was competent for a member to question the ruling of the Chair. Thereupon Mr Speaker intimated that unless the incident were brought to a close he should be bound to take action. Mr O'Donnell next asked how he could bring the Speaker's decision before the House? And was forthwith informed, by the Speaker, that unless

he kept to the two questions, the next in order would be put and his set aside. Under those circumstances, the Member for Dungarvan said he would not even put the questions which stood in his name. And so, passing in front of honourable members who occupied the same bench along with him, he stalked out of the door to the noise of cheering not altogether complimentary.

What was with difficulty done at last might easily have been done at first. The "old, obsolete rusty weapon"—last used effectually against Sir Walter Waddy in 1604, in the second year of the reign of King James I.—had been unearthed in vain. But fetters stronger than the sword were to be forged—after an ugly pattern imported from abroad, and called the *Clôture*.

CHAPTER V.

MR GLADSTONE AS AN ELEGIAC ORATOR ; AND THE CHARACTER OF LORD BEACONSFIELD.

MR GLADSTONE is a marvel of his age, and may prove a puzzle to posterity. The author of "The State in its Relations with the Church" must have been a very different man from the Minister subsequently associated with Messrs Bright and Chamberlain—the statesman who disestablished the Irish Church and was mainly instrumental in passing the Burials Act. When from time to time the great leader changes his mind, he does so from honest conviction, mixed with an appetite for applause, and then he sees his old friends in the light of a company of blind fools.

You cannot realize the Liberal chief, or form a picture of the man, solely through a study of his interminable speeches, books, pamphlets, letters, and post-cards. You must see him in the flesh—upon the platform, indoors, and out of doors, in the House of Commons, in opposition to the left of the Speaker, or lolling with the air of an invalid upon the Treasury Bench. There, in office, sits the First Lord of the Treasury and leader of the House of Commons, stretched out with his legs straight before him and his toes turned up to the glass ceiling. His hands he listlessly crosses upon his lap. His head droops over his right shoulder. His face is pallid. The corners of his mouth droop as if in

pain. His scant grey hair clings like a fringe of floss about the base of his great skull. His eyes are closed. The powerful features, touched with a tinge of sweetness and overworn with half a century of politics, mutely engender pity. His ill-fitting clothes hang loosely about his figure, always lithe and active in motion, and with the free stride of a wild thing of the woods. So tired seems the Premier reposing upon the Treasury Bench, that the pitiful heart goes forth to the old warrior of the State, plainly wearing himself out in his country's service.

So, seeming as if flaccid from want of sleep, he lies in wait. The men on the other side gird at his Government. Mr Gorst pelts him with the pebbles of perennial blame, Lord Randolph Churchill, light and agile as a bull-fighter, stings his broad hide with pointed darts, and Sir Stafford Northcote, from the opposite corner of the gangway by the mace, says the most disagreeable things with an amount of blandness which might put Ah Sin to the blush. Then the lax figure which seemed to sleep suddenly sits bolt upright, chin in the air and hands clasping his knees. And now the tribe of draughtsmen who evolve portraits of Mr Gladstone—with the aid of photographs—out of their inner consciousness might observe that there are only three fingers on the left hand; the first finger is no longer there, the knuckle being concealed with a circular black patch kept in its place by a narrow black riband drawn back and front of the palm. All traces of fatigue pass away as the eyes, large and luminous, keen and grey, rest with anger upon the enemy. The nostrils dilate, the lips—still close—work impatiently, the body leans forward, the hands gride upon the knees pressed outwards. In a moment Mr Gladstone is upon his feet! Say it is

a field night, and that he has come from some political reception. He wears evening clothes and a flower. And when he comes down to the House decorated with the spoils of the garden, the reporters sharpen their pencils, and members wait about the lobbies to hear him. By what process the Liberal chief rumples the fronts of his dress-shirts is a secret as close as that of the age of the world. With a couple of quick steps he comes to the despatch-box at the corner of the table, and for an instant beams upon the House. Then he opens the flood-gates of his oratory, and deluges the Commons with superb eloquence. The *timbre* of his voice is delightful, gliding, mellow, dropping to the soft sound of wind-stirred reeds by the river, rising to the full volume of the storm beating and bellying the sails of a ship at sea. In the heat and passion of debate Mr Gladstone does not respect persons, but rends friends and foes alike. In his eyes it is assuredly a sin to differ from him in opinion, even though his enemies' thoughts were his own of the previous day.

Not content to play the general, he must needs shoulder a musket, march with the baggage, and on occasion help to drag the guns uphill and take his turn at sentinel duty. He will leap to his feet to answer the most trivial question, and wrestle with the merest fledgling of the Chamber. He attributes too much consequence to small persons; and sometimes the impulse seizes him to strike at and crush them.

All his greatness, all his virtues notwithstanding, his love of applause amounts to a foible. The noise of cheering stirs his heart as with the sound of a trumpet.

That he is a great statesman and a great speaker is admitted on all hands, but that his oratorical style might with advantage be less diffuse is best known to those

whose duty to their constituents keeps them most often in their places in Parliament. No man living excels him in a Budget speech. He is a master of detail, and deals with complicated accounts with wonderful clearness and precision. He is, however, at his worst and is most verbose when answering questions. Assume that the hon. member for Sloppington has put down a question as follows: "To ask the First Lord of the Treasury whether he is aware that the Government charwomen have their dusters sewn by machinery. And whether he will lay upon the table of the House a return of the number of dusters used in the Treasury Department since the year 1688?" The question might be answered "Yes," or "No." That is not Mr Gladstone's method—this is: He rises deliberately, and having placed his hat on the Treasury Bench, he comes to the table, and smiles at the empty air. He places his hands behind him, and laying hold of the near corners of his coat tails, with his hands thrown outward from the wrists and his fingers held straight upright, still grasping the coat tails, and with his head a little on one side, begins: "Sir, the hon. member questions me whether I am aware that the charwomen employed in the office over which I have the honour to preside have or have not their dusters sewn by machinery; and the hon. member asks for a return. Well, sir, it seems to me the question is one which ought to be put, if at all, to my right hon. friend the Home Secretary. For my own part, though I have sat for nearly fifty years in this House, I do not recollect any question framed in precisely the same form of words. I would remind the hon. gentleman that there are three ways of sewing—perhaps I am within the knowledge of the House if I suggest to the hon. member that 'hemming' would

be the more exact term. As the House is probably aware, the hem of a duster may be turned in and fastened with ordinary glue, or, in the absence of that commodity, with common office gum; or the articles may be hemmed—yes, that is, I consider, the technical term—by the sewing machine, or they may be hemmed by hand. As I have pointed out in my studies on Homeric Domesticity, Helen of Troy adopted the last-named method with the dusters of that day. Now, sir, I think it to the interest of both parties—of honourable members on that side of the House and of my honourable friends on this side—I say it is to their interest, and for the benefit of the nation at large, that the use of gum or glue should not be encouraged for this purpose by the State. Sir, the time may come when a gum suitable for the purpose might be recommended by Her Majesty's Government. Hon. members may live to see it, but I shall probably have passed away. Well, sir, I may say frankly that, as one who received his political training in the school of Canning and of Peel, before the sewing machine came into common use, I prefer the housewife's needle. I have received a letter on this subject, which, with the permission of the House, I will read. My correspondent, a large consumer of dusters in Mid-Lothian, says, alluding to this subject: 'They are best sewn by hand.' I thank the House for that cheer. Now, sir, I have in the fewest possible words at my command, and in a manner the most explicit and the most direct, answered the question of the hon. member. And I take this opportunity of saying that the party over which I have the honour to preside will prove true to its principles, and that the banner of progress, if need be, red with the blood of martyrs, shall be held aloft—aye! it shall be held aloft—and carried from

hand to hand, and planted in the common heart of this great and glorious commonwealth till Time itself shall be no more!"

Like all orators of the impassioned type, Mr Gladstone is sometimes carried away by his enthusiasm. In dealing with finance, he is, however, a model of lucidity. All his facts and figures are arranged with business-like precision. A consummate master of detail, he can, at the same time, invest the ordinarily dry subject of Supply with literary grace, and impose a tax with the manner of a bard reciting a ballad. I have heard him speak hundreds of times, and have carefully studied his several styles; for the Liberal chief has many methods adapted to various occasions. No living parliamentary leader possesses an equal power of giving renewed life and energy to a flagging debate. When, as will occasionally happen, his followers seem to be getting the worst of the wordy encounter, he can at any moment, by the sheer force of a commanding and compelling eloquence, turn the tide of battle and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Likewise, he can be a master of reticence, as witness his attitude in many a Bradlaugh skirmish, when, sitting stolidly in his place on the Treasury Bench, he has temporarily resigned the initiative to the amiable Sir Stafford Northcote.

Three times during this tenth Parliament of the Queen it has fallen to my lot to hear the Prime Minister preach what may be called funeral sermons—first on the assassination of the Emperor Alexander of Russia; secondly, on the death of Lord Beaconsfield; and again on the murder of the ill-starred Lord Frederick Cavendish—the last being incomparably the greatest effort of the three.

The Emperor Alexander II. was murdered on

Sunday, March 13, 1881, close to the garden wall of the Michael Palace at St Petersburg, and on the evening of the following Tuesday addresses to Her Majesty and motions of sympathy and condolence with the Duchess of Edinburgh were carried unanimously in both Houses. The scene in the Lower Chamber was remarkable for the profound silence of an ordinarily noisy assembly. The House, generally disposed to applaud uncommon efforts of oratory, contented itself on that occasion with purposely subdued expressions of assent. The effect produced by the slightest difference in modulation in the deep tones of the Premier could be distinctly noted on the hushed and attentive audience. It was only at last as a greeting to the final passage of the melancholy speech that something like a cheer broke forth. The solemnity was, indeed, intensified by the dusk of evening which prevailed during the delivery of the address, relieved at last by a blaze of light that streamed suddenly through the glass roof of the Chamber as the final words of sorrow and praise fell from the trembling lips of "the old man eloquent." In accents, though weak, yet melodious, he invited the House, "loyally, earnestly, affectionately, and unanimously, to go to the foot of the Throne and assure her Majesty of the grief and the horror with which we contemplate this act, and of the sincere and respectful sympathy with which we enter into all the feelings which she must entertain with regard to this act." I shall never forget the impressiveness of the Premier's manner, nor the admirable emphasis with which he applied the words of Homer to the foully-murdered, liberal-minded Czar :—

"Let tyrants govern with an iron rod,
Oppress, destroy, and be the scourge of God,
Since he who, like a father, held his reign—
So soon forgot—was just and mild in vain."

Whether or not Mr Gladstone disliked the office of speaking an eulogium on the career of the late Lord Beaconsfield it would be difficult and perhaps uncharitable to say, but that he delayed the task and finally accomplished it in what seemed a half-hearted manner there can be, I take it, no doubt. The hope and stay of the Conservative party breathed his last at his house in Curzon Street, Mayfair, at half-past four in the morning of April 19, 1881, and was buried on his own estate of Hughenden Manor on the 26th of the month.

On the night of the funeral there was a crowded House in expectation of a speech from the First Lord of the Treasury ; but members went empty away, and not until the sitting of the 9th of May, on his motion to erect a monument to the deceased peer in Westminster Abbey at the public expense, did Mr Gladstone, reluctantly, as I cannot help thinking, perform what appeared to be a most distasteful duty. Although the speech read smoothly enough in the printed report, it was delivered, particularly the earlier passages, with manifest effort and considerable hesitation. Every word seemed to be weighed and balanced in the mind. The orator appeared as if he were held back by the fear lest he should say too little or too much to satisfy his conscience. A lack of spontaneity and of willingness was palpably evident, at least in the manner of the elegy. Indeed, it will generally be admitted that Mr Gladstone scarcely did his late rival the justice to be expected from a generous enemy. He desired to speak in the character of "an old and keen opponent" of the dead. The matter in hand was "monumental and complimentary." That was not "the occasion on which to attempt a political eulogy." Lord Beaconsfield had sustained a great historic part. His career was in many

respects the most "remarkable in our political history." "It would not be fair," he said, "it would not be just, even if it were appropriate, that I who have been separated from Lord Beaconsfield by longer and larger differences than, perhaps, ever separated two persons, should endeavour to draw a picture which must be too faintly coloured if executed by my hand." While admitting the admirable worldly qualities of the deceased statesman, he denied that anything like antipathy or hatred had existed between them—and, practically, that was all. An elegiac speech more cold, halting, and altogether depressing has probably seldom been heard within the walls of Parliament. It was not so much what Mr Gladstone said, as what he left unsaid which excited wonder and surprise among some even of his own following.

Benjamin Disraeli was a man of courage, of adroit intellect, and of a cheerful disposition. Nothing in him was superfluous, and nothing was wasted. He was always ready; quick of perception, strong of head, of heart, and of hand, Nature formed him for a leader of men. It may be that the armoury of his brain was limited in the variety of weapons; but, such as they were, he found them tough and pliable, and kept them bright and keen.

A man of unbounded ambition, of perfect discretion, and of nice honour, step by step he fought his way up hill to the top, never stopping by the roadside to do a shameful action either to serve a friend or hurt a foe. Children loved and women revered him. Their worship cheered and comforted him. There is nothing more touching in all his great life-history than the undivided love he bore his wife. She was his help-mate. Her means gave him ease, and he raised her to

the rank of a peeress, leaving himself, at the time, a commoner and her inferior in station.

To the ancient race and peculiar people from which he sprang he owed that indomitable perseverance and staying power, without which the brilliancy of his intellect, and even his cheerful courage in the face of disaster, would not have availed to raise him from the outer office of an attorney to a place near the Sovereign on the steps of the throne. It was impossible to conquer such a man without killing him outright; for, as he did not take defeat to heart, so he did not know when he was beaten.

Gifted with a florid imagination, he was, at the same time, possessed of the unpoetical faculty of putting the pictures of his mind into practical shape in worldly affairs; and as "public honour and proud titles" came to him, the natural reward of so much good work, he accepted them as a matter of course, and did not seem dazzled at a success within the measure of his great desires.

A master of phrases and a professor of expediency, the former gave pleasure to his friends and trouble to his enemies, and the latter enabled him to rise in the world. Accused, and with justice, of being an intellectual gladiator, it must also be allowed that he fought his battles bravely and fairly, hitting out with all his might, and taking his punishment with an indifference to pain and with a manly courage which would have won for him the plaudits of the circus.

The surface of his mind presented to public view was hard and brilliant as a well-cut gem of many facets and of the purest lustre. In the centre of his mind and of his heart there was a core of Radicalism. It could not be otherwise. He came of a stock that had been sub-

ject for centuries to obloquy and persecution. Such a man is the natural champion of all who endure the wrongs wrought by privilege. In another age, before the blessed spirit of toleration made a place possible for him in the councils of his adopted country, he might have put himself at the head of the Jews, and helped to weld the scattered atoms of the race into a nation, and even to have led them back to their ancient seat in the East. In yet another and a still darker time he who was a novelist, a satirist, and a statesman, might have been a prophet and a priest.

That self-same accident of birth which made him a Radical likewise made him an aristocrat. Coming of the family of Abraham, a prince of Arabia, he had a natural sympathy for known descent. Himself the product of ages of culture, and of a sect which, rightly or wrongly, dreads and despises manual labour, with one hand he fought against the oppression of a power which had hurt his people, while his other hand was extended in what to him seemed no more than an equal friendship with a proud aristocracy.

Thus it came to pass that he sincerely and frankly disliked the Whigs. It was the most natural thing in the world that the young literary adventurer of fifty years ago, capable of writing the "Revolutionary Epick," should assume to sit in Parliament at the feet of Daniel O'Connell and Joseph Hume, in the Radical interest; and it was no less natural, when we come to view his rounded character without prejudice, that later in life he should have conferred a coronet upon his wife and an Imperial crown upon his Sovereign.

All but literally, the world was the oyster of the brilliant youth — son of an unorthodox Jew and scholarly bookmaker — and his first care was how

easiest and best to open it and get at the palatable morsel inside. It was no trouble to him to discard the prejudices of his race, for he had never been encumbered with them. His father, a well-to-do Israelite, cared so little for the opinion of his co-religionists, that when they made him president of the synagogue he paid a fine rather than serve the office, and determining to sever himself from the community was thenceforward a Jew only in name. Isaac D'Israeli, as all men know, bought a property in Buckinghamshire, and set up for an English country gentleman. Long before that he had kept company with men of rank and men of letters, so that when young Benjamin, fired with a noble ambition for something better than law, kicked over the attorney's stool, there was already paved for him a narrow entry into Society. His natural courtier-like talents, aided by a certain wild beauty and personal eccentricity—the last only to be tolerated as the ornament of a solid structure—soon widened the passage, and Disraeli the younger, almost penniless, blossomed into a man of fashion.

Byron at that time was still an influence in England, and the brilliant young Jew, who had much in common with the author of "*Childe Harold*," aspired above all things to become a poet. He did not foresee, scarcely any one in those days foresaw, that the Byronic school was about to explode, and that English verse was to revert to the more natural voice and purer spirit of its sturdy youth. Had "*The Modern Dunciad*," and "*The Revolutionary Epick*" taken the town by storm, their author might never have adopted the trade of statesmanship. He himself hints as much in the preface to the *Epick*. With his usual daring he admits that it is put forward as an experiment which, should it prove unsuccessful, as indeed it did prove, would presently be

discarded without shame, and without regret. The Byronic attempt having come to nothing, the lad next set himself the task of satirical novel writing, and succeeded if not beyond his hopes, yet to admiration. As Byron had done, he also woke one morning to find himself famous.

At length this soaring young spirit had gained some sort of rest for the soles of his feet. The attorney's office and its small possibilities had become a thing of the past, only to be remembered with a self-congratulatory sneer. Without any of the advantages which are supposed to attach to a university education, he had acquired the reputation of a brilliant public writer, and the entry into fashionable drawing-rooms. His curled head, and velvet coat, and lace ruffles were familiar in the boudoirs of duchesses. His smart sayings were the talk of the most coveted society of the town.

As it may be assumed with the Byronic influence still upon him, he quitted a card-playing, scandal-loving coterie to drink of the inspiration of liberty and literature at their fountains in Greece and Italy. Thence he visited the cradle of his race, and came back to London poor and ambitious, but more determined than ever to open his oyster, the world. This, indeed, was the true turning-point in his career. "Alroy" followed "Vivian Grey," and "Coningsby" followed "Alroy." "Disraeli, the younger" might, had he so willed it, have set up for a literary man, and lived by his pen; but like Swift, a greater satirist, he looked on literature only as a means to an end. Politics was his game, and he meant to play it—but how?

The game of politics having to be played for his own advancement, Mr Disraeli, at the ripe age of thirty-two, determined to play it in the Radical interest. The old

order had changed and given place to new. The Reform Bill was a thing of the past. Thenceforward the story of his life belongs to modern history, and he becomes one of the central figures of forty years of Parliamentary struggle. He chose Radicalism for two reasons: first, because it did not outrage his sympathies; and secondly, because it looked like a winning card; and, later on, he forsook Radicalism for the more desperate cause of Tory supremacy, because he was as much an Aristocrat as a Radical, and likewise because it afforded a wider field for his splendid talents. There is no denying that, strictly speaking, he was a political turncoat. He was a soldier of fortune, brave, upright and honourable in the pursuit of his profession of arms.

He attacked Sir Robert Peel and Mr Gladstone, and many lesser lights of Parliament, and dealt them swashing blows. He cut them to the quick with happily-conceived jests, and held them up to ridicule with phrases which will be quoted while the language endures. In serving the Tory cause, he outbid the enemies of his employers for popularity. He mined the ground under their feet, and carried away the prizes which they fought for at the sword's point. Surely such a brilliant Free Lance never before shone in any senate.

Was he an Englishman in heart and spirit? Who shall say? He talked bucolics to the farmers of Buckinghamshire. He passed a Reform Bill. He made the Queen Empress of India, many parsons bishops, and many commoners, himself among the number, peers of the realm. He scattered stars and garters as if he had been an emperor born in the purple. He found the Conservative party brick and left it marble, and for that fine service Conservatives owe him a debt of everlasting gratitude.

So much, indeed, Mr Gladstone may have admitted to himself, while speaking to the conduct and character of his deceased rival. The occasion, however, was not one for discussion but for praise, not for a coldly conducted analysis but for a gracious eulogium; and that the orator either could not or would not speak.

Far different was Mr Gladstone's elegiac manner in dealing with the case of poor Lord Frederick Cavendish, murdered in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, a year later.

Owing to the Irish policy of the Government, Mr Forster, a man of indomitable energy and the highest character, was forced to resign the office of Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Lord Frederick Cavendish—vocally unfitted to combat the fluent, reckless, and aggressive band of professional debaters who follow Mr Parnell's lead—was appointed to his place.

On the afternoon of May 7th, 1882, when the news of the outrage of the day before was expected to become the subject of mournful comment, the People's Chamber put on the aspect of a house of mourning. Rival parties, touched by a common sorrow, sank their differences in the expression of universal regret. Great statesmen, practised orators, could scarcely speak; so hard was their task to keep from sobbing. Some strong men, for all their efforts to seem calm, fairly broke down; and many eyes saw the Premier, only through mists of tears, when first he rose, pale and sorrowful, to fulfil his painful task.

At four o'clock the House did not appear full; and small groups of members gathered close together, talking in hushed voices, as if the dead were actually within the chamber. Every available seat set aside for their

use had been taken by peers, spiritual and temporal ; and among them sat the Duke of Teck, dressed in deep mourning. Later on the Assembly was crowded from table to walls with a mass of men in sombre garments, as at a funeral. For nearly one-half of the forty minutes of the sitting the Treasury Bench stretched bare almost from end to end. No Cabinet Minister was present. The Opposition chiefs, Sir Stafford Northcote excepted, had, however, mustered early, all in black. While Mr Speaker—standing upon the raised platform in front of the chair—transacted some necessary, formal business, Mr Forster stood by his right shoulder, resting an elbow on the broad, flat arm of the chair, and looking straight before him, as if lost in thought. Soon, and just as the Chairman of Committees, having come up the floor to the table with a Bill, had taken a position upon the Treasury Bench, the ex-Chief Secretary passed in front of him and stepped up the gangway to the end seat of the third row ; further away from Ministers than he had hitherto placed himself since his resignation. Scarcely was Mr Forster seated by the side of Mr Serjeant Simon, before Mr Bourke, late Conservative Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, crossed the floor to speak with him. There was, indeed, much crossing and recrossing, with many consultations before the House settled down. Mr Gibson, looking pained and ill, held a whispered conference with the Speaker, and was followed by Mr Guildford Onslow and Mr Newdegate. The signs that the sitting would be short, and that only the most pressing business was likely to be dealt with, gradually accumulated. Even Mr Childers was fain to shut up and lay aside his crimson despatch-box—the single spot of colour on a field of black—for no questions touching

the army were asked or answered that day. While the Irish, led by Mr Parnell, dejected and miserable, were packed close together near the door; and in the doorway itself stood a crowd of members—conspicuous among them Mr Biggar, the unabashed.

The Treasury Bench gradually filled; Sir William Harcourt, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr Forster, Mr Childers, Mr Bright, and Mr Fawcett were all present. Everything was now in readiness waiting for the Premier. The Government Whips passed in and out, busy with their duties, but still the Prime Minister did not appear. Then Sir William Harcourt, evidently anxious, went out behind the Speaker's chair, and almost immediately returned, followed by the leader of the House, who stayed on his way to consult with Sir Henry Brand. Just then Mr Chamberlain being about to enter, Mr Gladstone touched him on the arm, and the two retired together, but came back in a few moments, the Prime Minister leading his subordinate by the hand. The President of the Board of Trade seemed haggard with grief. Never before, until now, not even on the death of Lord Beaconsfield, had he appeared without some kind of flower in his coat. Mr Gladstone had already seated himself next the Home Secretary, and buried his bent head in his outstretched hands, when Sir Stafford Northcote came in. Of all the Cabinet and the opposing chiefs, only Lord Hartington, the dead man's eldest brother, was absent.

To see the Prime Minister stand up in front of the despatch-box, deathly pale, and with a look of inexpressible sadness in his worn face, was a piteous sight. When some respectful tokens of sympathy had subsided he looked appealingly round the House—tears in his eyes. Holding a white handkerchief in his hand, and

with a quick, spontaneous movement raising it to clear his sight, he began in faltering accents to say, "Sir, I rise—" Then he paused, and presently resumed, "I rise for the purpose which the feeling of the House will anticipate." Conquering himself, he went on to speak of the sad event which had come home to the minds of Parliament and the public. He spoke of the blackness of the crime which had been committed; and of the feeling of horror created among the entire population of the United Kingdom. Whereupon the House gave what rather was a general sigh of assent than a cheer; and Mr Parnell, blanched of visage, and with his hands resting listlessly in front of him, bowed his head, in token that he too joined in the common sentiment. "Sir," Mr Gladstone went on to say—his voice scarcely under command in dealing with the memory of his friend and relative—"I find it difficult to say the word, yet, Sir, I must say, one of the very noblest hearts has ceased to beat." And now, the response of the House came loud and clear in their tribute to the awful fate of the murdered men. Thereafter—for a time—the Prime Minister seemed more himself; and announced the future policy of the Government with respect to Ireland in short and simple terms. Yet he broke down again before the end of his short but pathetic speech. Mr Burke he described as "one of the ablest, the most upright, the most experienced, the most eminent members of that civil service to which in the hands of its permanent officers we owe so much in the government of this country," and of Lord Frederick as "full of love, full of hope for Ireland, and full of capacity to render her service."

Sir Stafford Northcote likewise passed a warm eulogium upon the memory of the murdered officials, and

was followed by Mr Parnell, who, to do him justice, expressed his unqualified detestation of the horrible crime which had been committed in Dublin. In the beginning of his speech the leader of the Home Rule Party was received with tokens of surprise and disapproval, signs of dissent which speedily subsided. At first he spoke softly and in faltering tones, so that it was not easy to follow him. Presently, however, he raised his voice in detestation of the crime; in denunciation of the criminals; and in defence of the honour and integrity of his followers, whose interests, he avowed, were jeopardised by this, the act of their deadliest enemies. When he had ceased speaking there was a momentary silence, followed by a faint Radical cheer.

Ever generous in its appreciation of political foresight and sound common-sense, the House of Commons greeted the rising of Mr Forster with sustained applause. He himself was deeply moved. In manly, loving, and appreciative words, he spoke of the amiable qualities, the clear judgment of his late successor, of whose appointment he had approved, and of the talents, industry, and integrity of Mr Burke, a loyal subject and faithful servant of the Queen, a man of unprejudiced intellect, a firm friend to the Irish people. Mr Forster was followed by Mr James Lowther, also in praise of Mr Burke, and at twenty minutes to five o'clock the Sergeant-at-Arms removed the mace from the table, and the House adjourned. But though the sad business of the day was over, members were loth to quit the melancholy scene. Mr Gladstone went slowly out behind the golden "bauble," the way he came, other Ministers remained behind talking on the Treasury Bench. A small crowd of Conservatives flocked

about their chief in earnest conversation. The Irish members were the last to go. Still in their places sat Messrs Parnell, Dillon, T. D. Sullivan, Justin M'Carthy, Biggar, Healy, and several others of that faction, in animated consultation, and not until the galleries were empty and the floor of the House was otherwise deserted did the Parnellites rise and leave, passing dejectedly, as it seemed reluctantly, out of the doorway, with the air of men fully sensible of the burthen of a grave and terrible responsibility.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FOURTH PARTY.

THE Fourth Party consists of three persons—Lord Randolph Henry Spencer Churchill, M.P. for Woodstock; Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, K.C.B., M.P. for Christchurch; and Mr John Eldon Gorst, M.P. for Chatham—all three capable men. The sobriquet originated in a jocular remark of Sir Henry Wolff, who, alluding to the fact that the Parnellites consider themselves a “Third Party,” said, “Then we will be the Fourth Party.” Lord Randolph Churchill, leader of the “dauntless three,” does not now recognise the propriety of the description, and never alludes to it in public, as it gives great offence to the acknowledged Conservative chiefs. Nevertheless, if my recollection serves, the noble lord announced in the House, on one occasion, that he himself, “and they who act with me, will support Ministers in their endeavours to pacify Ireland;” and that the assurance excited no inconsiderable amount of banter. I likewise distinctly remember the night of August 9, 1880. The estimates were being discussed—as usual in a thin House—when Mr Biggar, looking round with a pleased expression of countenance, called the attention of Dr Lyon Playfair, the Chairman, to the palpable fact, that there were not forty members present. After the “count,” and when the disturbed legislators had gone back to their dinner, the salaries of officers of the Courts of Judicature being under

discussion, Mr Watkin Williams, since raised to the bench, was very severe on the judge's "marshal." Crossing from his place on the Liberal side, he took a seat "in opposition," whence, rising, he inveighed against the red robes of the judges, their hot, horse-hair wigs, their carriages and javelin-men, their going to church in state, and what he was pleased to describe as "the rest of the old-fashioned rubbish." A thrill of horror seemed to run through the sparse assembly as the hon. gentleman avowed this doctrine of judicial Iconoclasm; and he had scarcely sat down when Mr Gorst rose, close by, and indignantly repudiated the then Member for Carnarvonshire "*in the name of 'the Fourth Party.'*" Mr Watkin Williams, he complained, had selected that bench from which to express disrespect for the pomp and state of the judges of assize; but he, Mr Gorst, and the "*Fourth Party*" had no sympathy with him. This more or less serious reference to that political union caused an outburst of laughter which quite smoothed away the frowns begotten of Mr Watkin Williams's more than revolutionary sentiments on the subject of the judges' wigs and their "marshals."

That this trio consider themselves "a party" may be inferred from the incident that at the end of a session they have dined together at Greenwich, and that the *menu* on that occasion was not innocent of whitebait. Mr Arthur Balfour, M.P. for Hertford, was at one time a nominal member of the group, but has long since ceased to work with them.

Politicians are attracted towards a man of dominant mind, as soldiers rally to the colours on a battle field—and the duke's son inherits many of the qualities of the conqueror of Blenheim. Although not yet thirty-five years old, he is among the most brilliant and conspicu-

ous Members of the House of Commons, in which assembly he has occupied a seat since February 1874. Scarcely above the middle height, of slight build, and apparently delicate constitution, Lord Randolph Churchill has smooth, dark brown hair, parted down the middle, and thin at the crown. The head is small, the eyes large, the nose short, and the cheek-bones somewhat high. His lordship's moustache is, however, the most conspicuous object of his personal appearance. It is the large blonde moustache of a Zouave of politics. Once, by mistake, Mr Jacob Bright alluded to the noble lord as "the Member for Woodcock," and the House laughed consumedly. And once a newspaper scribe hit upon a happier title: *The Bantam of Debate*.

From four o'clock in the afternoon, all through dreary question time, he sits impatiently in his place, gently agitating his left knee, nursed above his right, and affectionately caressing the moustache. Dexter and sinister hands go up alternately to the silky darling of his lips. Fresh with rest, or haggard and pale with late hours, Lord Randolph never ceases to fondle the moustache. It lends an added joy to the unfrequent hour of victory, or while Lord Hartington, sixteen years his senior, attempts, but fails, to wither him, with an assumption of patriarchal superiority.

Undoubtedly this old, young man prefers politics to what is called pleasure, yet does not ignore the claims of society in the world of words. He is of the very few Members of Parliament who dress for dinner. So the flowers and songsters of the virgin forest, unseen, unheard of man, are made pleasant to look on; and what nature does for bud and blossom, the barber and the tailor do for the lively leader of the Fourth Party.

Lord Randolph's clothes are, however, but the husk of him, the outside part first seen. The kernel within seems sound, and, if carefully preserved, may hereafter become illustrious. His industry is marvellous, his readiness of resource, worthy of all praise ; and though he speaks frequently, he is on the whole worth listening to. He is not eloquent with the eloquence of Mr Gladstone or Mr Bright. He has, indeed, a slight lisp, an imperfection of vocal delivery which spoils his pronunciation of some of the consonants, particularly of the letter S. If, however, he never rises to lofty heights of declamation, he seldom sinks below the safe level of commonplace. His occasional observations are neatly turned, and his set speeches cleverly constructed. He is scarcely ever at a loss for an idea, never for a word. Reverence—what is called veneration—cannot, however, be described as his strong point. Supposed to be subordinate to Sir Stafford Northcote, when it suits him to do so, he defies his chief ; and the approved leaders of the Liberal Party fret under his stinging and unsparing invective. Though not always brilliant, his sallies are often cutting. His daring knows no bounds. Mr Gladstone once called across the floor that he had utterly smashed, pulverised, and demolished him. That was a mistake. The Prime Minister might as well have attempted to annihilate a Jack-in-the-Box by shutting down the lid.

Besides obtaining a new and more commodious smoking-room for the use of his fellow-members, the noble lord has rendered good service to Parliament and the country since the accession of Mr Gladstone to office ; and particularly by the part he took in mitigating the rigours of the Clôture Resolutions. The Premier and his colleagues believed, no doubt sincerely, that it

was impossible for them to carry on the business of the country under the old system of debate, which admitted of obstruction. That system, however, embraced privileges which had been gradually wrested from the Crown during centuries of struggle ; and its modification as proposed and effected, was, and is, calculated to place enormous power in the hands of the Ministers of the day ; to invest them with a prerogative of silencing discussion of a kind, amounting to tyranny, not tolerated by the Commons of old, even when assumed by kings. The Fourth Party fought the New Rules as drafted—tooth and nail—and succeeded in winning many concessions from the Treasury Bench—concessions invaluable to both sides. For it must always be borne in mind that Government by party is a game of see-saw. Indeed, a time may come when Liberals will bitterly repent the part they took in passing the New Rules of Procedure.

Sir Henry Wolff entered Parliament at the same time as his chief, having previously served as Private Secretary both to Lord Malmesbury and Sir Bulwer Lytton, at the Foreign and Colonial Offices. Born in 1830, he entered the diplomatic service when he was no more than sixteen years old, and by the time he was twenty-two, acted as *chargé d'affaires* at Florence. At twenty-six he was attached to Lord Westmoreland's mission to Brussels, and from the age of twenty-nine to thirty-five served as Public Secretary to the Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands ; and later went on a mission to Roumelia. Sir Henry is thoroughly versed in diplomatic affairs ; and does not hesitate to give an opinion on military matters—having been in the militia. He is a ready though not a brilliant debater—

is short and stout, with a large well-formed bald head, and a profusion of fair whiskers and moustache. His father was the famous Dr Wolff, by birth a Jew, a missionary by profession, and, in spite of his eccentricities, at one time popular in society. Dr Wolff married Lady Georgina Walpole, daughter of the second Earl of Orford, and of that union Sir Henry is the fruit.

Mr Gorst is a lawyer whose experience of Parliament dates from 1866. He represented Cambridge borough from the spring of that year to the autumn of 1868, when he again put up, but was not returned. In Feb. 1875 he courted and won Chatham, for which place he has since sat. He is tall and sturdy, with regular features, a high, bare forehead, and an iron-grey, full, pointed beard. Mr Gorst is a fluent speaker and a close reasoner—bold, aggressive, and argumentative. He is a Lancashire man, was at one time a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, and in 1861 received the appointment of Civil Commissioner of Waikata, New Zealand, which position he held four years; and on his return to England was called at the Middle Temple, and became a Member of Parliament.

These three remarkably clever and adventurous politicians—of whom not one has been in office—sit at the near corner of the front Opposition Bench below the gangway—with the Parnellites at their rear—the place formerly affected by Sir Charles Dilke, when an independent member, during the Government of Lord Beaconsfield. They are regular in their attendance—one at least being always on guard; and if every member of the House spoke as often and as long as does each of this wordy triumvirate, the session would last six years instead of six months. Occasionally they

act with the regular Opposition—generally voting on the Conservative side—but often take an independent stand, harassing the Government at every turn.

Lord Randolph Churchill, his ultra-Conservatism to the contrary, has evinced decided Radical tendencies. On the second reading of the abortive Factory and Workshop Act Amendment Bill, to prohibit the employment of girls under fourteen in the occupations of nail making and chain making, while such pronounced Liberals as Sir Charles Dilke and Mr Arthur Arnold spoke against the proposed measure, the noble lord supported it. His name was also on the back of Mr Chaplain's dropped Bill of last session "to secure to agricultural tenants compensation for their improvements, in all cases;" and he is in favour of enabling urban leaseholders to purchase the fee-simple of their leases. He upheld the motion of the Radical Mr Dillwyn to reduce the estimate for royal palaces; and himself made a motion to omit from the vote for public buildings the item of £5000 for new works of a minor character.

His habit of plain speaking must be particularly distasteful to the Government. For example, during the discussion in Committee on the Corrupt Practices Bill, when Mr Labouchere proposed to make it illegal for any person to obtain a baronetcy or other title, for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of any other person, the Attorney-General tried to turn it off as joke. Lord Randolph quickly came to the rescue of the Member for Northampton,—among the most advanced Radicals in the House. It was, he urged, no joking matter, and mentioned the cases of Sir R. Price and Sir H. Johnstone who, he alleged, had been rewarded, the former with a baronetcy, and the

latter with a peerage, for making way for Lord Hartington and Mr Dobson respectively. Of course the Prime Minister indignantly repudiated the insinuation. But it may be assumed that assertions of the kind, even though incapable of proof, are peculiarly vexatious to the dispensers of patronage.

The Fourth Party have steadily opposed Mr Gladstone's Irish "remedial legislation." Mr Gorst's amendment to the Irish section of the Address, last year, led to a stormy four nights' debate. And, with regard to the South African doings of Ministers, he moved last March to secure the observance by the Transvaal Government of the Convention of 1881. The discussion which ensued lasted three days. The party have narrowly watched and keenly criticised our latest Egyptian policy. They have, over and over again, stirred up the subject of Mr Errington's visits to the Vatican, and made the most of the so-called "Treaty of Kilmainham." They are looked on as the embodiment of "Radical-Toryism"—whatever that novel phrase may mean. Were it not for their energy and daring, the Tory Party in the House of Commons would seem as if afflicted with an unaccountable drowsiness, a tameness having the appearance of timidity.

Judging by his attitude, Sir Stafford Northcote holds that the Liberal Party, when in power, ought to be allowed fair play—and something over. He knows and appreciates the difficulties of the responsible advisers of the Crown, and is always considerate, courteous and urbane. Not so Lord Randolph and his faithful two. They claim that it is their business, if not their duty, to embarrass Ministers, and they do so to the best of their considerable ability.

The power and influence of an organised political con-

federation depends to a great extent on the enterprise, the vigour, and the hardihood of its leaders, apart from their administrative abilities. It should therefore be regretted—by Conservatives—that their regular chiefs lack the dash and spirit which animate the numerically insignificant Fourth Party. Lord Randolph Churchill agrees with Lord Palmerston, who defined a Parliamentary Opposition as “assigned by Providence to trip up the Government before they fall.”

CHAPTER VII.

PARNELLISM AND PARNELLITES.

PARNELLISM grew out of Fenianism, on which it is an unquestionable improvement as an instrument of agitation against the Queen's Government in Ireland. It has, however, more in common with Fenianism than with the lukewarm Home Rule movement formerly presided over by the late Mr Isaac Butt, M.P. Parnellism dates from a period subsequent to Mr Charles Stewart Parnell's election for Meath County, in April 1875.

That remarkable man does not at all resemble the ordinary conception of an Irish agitator. His nature seems to have little in common with the Celtic race, whose representatives, not long ago, at a banquet in Dublin, presented him with a cheque for £35,000.

On the father's side he is Hibernian, on the mother's side American; and the mixture of blood seems to have had the effect of deadening the emotional characteristics of the male stock, or at least of driving them beneath the surface.

He talks veiled treason in the *nonchalant* tones of a man ordering dinner, and you must listen attentively to realize the full meaning of what he says. In almost all ways he is in direct contrast with Mr Shaw, who might have been considered to be Mr Butt's natural successor. Mr Shaw has a deferential manner, real or affected, and a rich musical brogue. Unlike the majority of Irish noncontents, he crossed the floor with

the Liberal Party. At the time when he railed against a Conservative Government from "the cold shade of Opposition" he flung forth his threats concealed in sugar-plums of compliment. With smiling face and flattering tongue, it was the custom of Mr Shaw to belaud the Conservative Ministry for their good intentions towards "me onhappy conthry," and to conclude by sweetly remarking that unless the said unhappy country were forthwith dowered with milk and honey at the expense of the Saxon oppressor, he (Mr Shaw), for all his smiles and cheery manner, might not be able to prevent bloodshed. Mr Butt was a magnificent but uncertain advocate. Mr Shaw is one of the most amiable individuals that ever flirted with the open defiance of law and order. Mr Parnell, however, is by far the most commanding man of the trio.

On a first impression the leader of the Irish irreconcilable party may easily strike the beholder as not strong enough for the post—physically or intellectually. That feeling will, however, soon wear off, and with closer scrutiny entirely pass away. His faculties are husbanded, his force reserved. He never blusters, never rants, but manages to assert himself, and to stem the torrent of debate, apparently without an effort. Judged by conventional standards, there is in him not one single trait of what is accepted as Irish disposition and manner. His temper is perfect; he displays no taint of passion; and his languid voice drags a little, as if his soul were weary.

He is thirty-eight years of age. At a glance you might suppose him to be ten years older. Above the middle height, with fairly broad shoulders and a frame not at all attenuated, his physique, nevertheless, conveys the idea of weakness, if not of suffering. His head

is large, broad, and high, with scanty and brownish hair. Cold, almost colourless, eyes look out, from amid a sallow complexion, upon the outer world as if it contained little of interest to their owner. The nose is slightly angular, the nostrils shapely. Formerly he wore a full beard. Now his chin is shaven. The man is manifestly indifferent to the vanities of personal appearance. In his black frock-coat, tweed trousers, and rusty hat, walking with moderate pace along the public streets, he might be mistaken for a sober, responsible, middle-aged commercial clerk.

His dominant nature contradicts a somewhat feeble appearance. In the first place he is possessed of great powers of physical endurance, and will sit hour after hour watching daylight give way to darkness, and the night retreat before the morning, without displaying any sign of mental or bodily fatigue. Appearing to give his oddly-mixed following full scope and play for all their wild vagaries, he has them well in hand, and can stop them in mid-career or turn them at will. They may bellow and rant, he remains calm, ready to lay his hand quietly on the heart of the matter at issue, and restore reason to the debate. With them he is never familiar.

Mr Dawson may pour out perfervid rhetoric in a tumbling torrent of brogue-adorned nonsense; Mr Arthur O'Connor may move the House to anger with petulant insistence upon questions of minor detail, and Mr T. D. Sullivan may air his common-place heroics till laughter and admiration mingle for his reward. Still Mr Parnell preserves his impassiveness. He is not only the helmsman but the ballast of the party.

Several members of the faction are his creatures—not necessarily in the worst sense of the term—pledged to

do his bidding. He made them ; and, it may be assumed, can unmake them. He found them, more or less clever and aspiring young men, in poverty and obscurity, and raised them to the dignity of a place in Parliament. Their presence in the House of Commons is, indeed, a spectacle most extraordinary in a country which has not heretofore fostered a race of professional politicians.

Mr Parnell is ready, on occasion, to make a short speech at a moment's notice. Such *impromptus* are, when he pleases, to the point, and are often successful. His set orations, of considerable length and frequency, he, however, carefully prepares. Although monotonously and somewhat frigidly delivered, they never fail to leave an impression of extreme cleverness on the mind of the House. He deals with the wrongs of Ireland, real and imaginary, as a professor might do in demonstrating the facts of science. He does not appeal to the feelings but to the intellect of his auditors. Historically accurate, incisive, persistent, he unfolds his case with deliberation, trusting to the persuasiveness of logic, and utterly ignoring the poetry and fervour of the ordinary Celtic method. He excuses the rebellion and condones the cruelties of the wild Irish peasantry as the direct result of English misgovernment in the past. In his utterances, and possibly to his mind, the one follows as a natural consequence of the other.

Not from any single speech or set formula of demand, but from the whole tenour of his Parliamentary career, it may be inferred that he claims for Ireland that she should be permitted to govern herself, independently of the Act of Union. He and his followers seem to contend that she should be left to make laws for herself, suitable, as they hold, to the genius of the Irish people ;

should be allowed to tax herself for her own needs, and to deal with her own land—or, in other words, to sweep the present race of landlords off the face of the earth.

So far the land agitation has been eminently successful ; and a form of Home Rule would appear to be now only a question of time.

Fenianism—an Irish-American product—was practically played out in Ireland with the collapse of the attempted rising at Limerick Junction in the spring of 1867, with the treachery of the informer Corydon, the arrest of young Godfrey Massey, the escape of General Cluseret, and the conviction of John Devoy and Michael Davitt for “levying war against the Queen.” It continues to drag on in America, fostered by O'Donnovan Rossa, Devoy, and their confederates, but Parnellism has superseded it within the confines of the still so-called United Kingdom.

Fenianism being discarded as impracticable, and English remedial legislation having, to some extent, pacified the worst form of Irish discontent, the Home Rulers, under Isaac Butt, sought to obtain their ends by legitimate agitation within the walls of Parliament. The Home Rule Party, however, had already developed an “active” section, represented by men of the type of Mr Biggar and Mr Dillon, at the time when Mr Parnell appeared upon the scene. To Mr Biggar belongs the questionable honour of initiating the most vexatious points of the system of Irish obstruction in the House of Commons.

Mr Biggar made his fortune as a provision merchant in Belfast. He unsuccessfully contested Londonderry City in 1872, but was returned for Cavan at the General Election two years later.

There is much in this gentleman's outward appearance to recommend him to the devotees of Momus. His small shrewd face is full of latent humour, his little twinkling eyes, his little "tip-tilted" nose, his long upper lip, broad angular mouth and large ears, proclaim him ripe for mischief and rollicking fun.

Touching his well-known love of beautiful clothes : he prefers to wear his black cloth trousers short in the leg, in order to display the bold outlines of a pair of feet encased in gigantic Wellington boots. He affects a frock-coat, and is famous for his sealskin waistcoat. It does not follow that because some men conceal their waistcoats that he should imitate their secretive example, or that he should not—when addressing the House, draw himself up to his full height of about five feet, and cocking his little chin, held sideways, in the air—place his thumbs in the arm-holes thereof, thus displaying his soft and furry breast.

Mr Biggar is not less attractive in repose than in activity. His place is ever among the Parnellites on the Speaker's left below the gangway. He does not, however, confine himself to any particular habitat on his own side ; but, so to say, swings from rest to rest. Now crouching in the rear of Mr Parnell, now bending forward triumphantly from the front bench, and, when the Conservative chiefs have temporarily deserted the Chamber for a well earned spell of idleness, filling their seats and mimicking office in a manner the most ludicrous.

Shrewd he is, and frisky, and confident, and gifted with powers of fluent speech, if not with a genius for oratory. His House of Commons manner is colloquial, his language, though commonplace, terse and telling, and his persistence, in the face of opprobrium, without parallel in Parliament.

He encourages a more than Socratic love of asking questions. No subject is too lofty and none too small for his insatiate appetite for interrogation. If the infant daughter of the postmistress at Paddywhackum happens to be afflicted with measles, he may wish:—"To ask the Chief-Secretary for Ireland whether, in face of the existence of infectious disease in Paddywhackum rendering some portion of the inhabitants of that district unfit for the exercise of their ordinary callings, it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to remit a part of the local taxation?"

Parnellism has no more industrious advocate, Obstruction no more enterprising supporter than the member for Cavan. In Committees of Ways and Means, before the New Rules put a bridle upon his energy, he used constantly to rise, and as constantly drop upon his nest—as gaily as a lark on a summer's morning. Even now, he deals exhaustively, not to say exhaustingly, with the Irish estimates. Every button upon the coats of the constabulary passes before his acute vision, and is subject to his racy criticism.

Woe to the Saxon official in Ireland whose conduct, in the opinion of Mr Biggar, is directly or indirectly worthy of the censure of Parliament. However annoying may be his conduct to the real or fancied enemies of his country he does not pause to consider, but follows up his indictment step by step, and session after session, making use of all the forms of the House to hunt his quarry to destruction. Ministers may over and over again have assured him that they see no reason for interference. Refusal only whets his appetite for what he conceives to be justice. Again and again he returns to the charge, holding up to further public scorn and obloquy individuals whom Parliament has already

undertaken to protect. His hatred of landlordism carries him beyond the recognised courtesies of debate—beyond, indeed, that love of fair play which should be the politician's guiding star. He is great at apology. When, as sometimes happens, he makes some outrageous statement reflecting on another member of the House, and the Speaker desires him to withdraw the offensive expression, he does so with a smiling non-chalance worthy of a better cause, as if, the charge once made, a jovial recantation were the best of good jokes. Occasionally he will fence with the Speaker before withdrawing, and always with a readiness of retort and a quaint humour provocative of laughter.

The Parnellites have different methods of obstruction. Mr Biggar formerly loved to pass the time in reading copious and deadly-dull extracts from Hansard. When, on obstruction nights, his diminutive form was seen bending beneath a pile of Parliamentary Reports, men braced their nerves for what would assuredly follow. On one occasion he explained to the assembly, that, though not a great orator, he would, with permission, do his best to entertain them with a reading. And he was better than his word; for he read page after page, speech after speech from Hansard, until the grating treble of his voice pained the impatient ear, and had he not, after prolonged torturing, desisted from the awful infliction, a general collapse must have ensued.

Mr Biggar's "Hear! hear!" is an uncanny sound; once heard, it never can be forgotten; and exceeds in horrible frequency even that of Mr Warton. Always shrill, sharp, and metallic, by turns it encourages, deprecates, denies, and defies. It will break in suddenly upon a speaker's opening sentence, or spoil the most rhetorical period of his peroration.

The man is a born jester, and lends a not always disagreeably acid flavour to the florid oratory of Erin. His antics, if generally mischievous, and seldom in good taste, are at least sometimes entertaining.

When, for example, Mr Dawson, with a rushing river of words, deluges the House with eloquence, and pictures Erin personified—beautiful, tearful, virtuous, unfortunate, beaten, deflowered, tortured, cast as “rub-bish to the void” by her brutal and implacable Saxon tyrant—tropes pour like molten lava from his trembling lips—he threatens, conjures, appeals, dares to the death, landed-wretches greedy of rent, until, at length, limp and worn-out, he sinks exhausted into his seat, Mr Biggar rises, and with some well-timed witticism, restores good humour to the sorely-tried assembly. The hard-headed, matter of fact English Radicals jeer at Mr Dawson’s flaming periods. They did so when—during the passage of the Coercion Bill—he cried out that the Chief Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant wanted “to pull Irish women out of their beds at night.” Though they were merry at his expense, he was very much in earnest; and in reply to their contemptuous laughter literally screeched: “I speak as a husband and a brother, and any man who comes to lay a hand on my wife will have to do so over my dead body.” Again—inveighing against evictions—Mr Dawson in a white-heat of rage, exclaimed, “If you take my farm” (he is not a farmer but a baker), “you take the means by which I live, and hence you take my life, and if you take my life you murder me.” The Radicals, however, could not, or would not, see the force of Mr Dawson’s reasoning, but tried, ineffectually, to roar him down.

Mr T. D. Sullivan is the poet of the party. His first

effusions were printed in the *Nation* newspaper, the famous Irish Nationalist organ, of which he is now proprietor and editor. They are full of fire, and have been of immense service to the cause, both in Ireland and in the United States. Most of these stirring verses are topical, begot of the events of the hour. When Mr Parnell advised the farmers to pay rent to the amount of Griffith's valuation, and no more, Mr T. D. Sullivan, without delay, put that advice into a form not easily forgotten:—

“Farmers, far and near,
Long despoiled by plunder,
Let your tyrants hear
Your voices loud as thunder,
Shout from shore to shore
Your firm determination
To pay in rents no more
Than ‘Griffith’s valuation.’
That’s the word to say,
To end their confiscation ;
That’s the rent to pay—
‘Griffith’s valuation.’”

What did it matter to the Land League that Griffith's Valuation was not an assessment for rent, but for rates; and was naturally much lower than the letting value of the land, or that it was made some fifty years ago? Nor could the bard better back up his leader's monition to the discontented tenant, not to take a farm from which another had been evicted, than by singing:—

“No, we shall leave untilled, unsown
The lands, however fair,
From which an honest man was thrown
Upon the roadside bare ;
As if a curse was on the spot
That saw such hateful deeds,
We'll leave the empty house to rot,
The fields to choke with weeds.”

As a speaker in the House the Parnellite poet is by turns inflammatory and persuasive, but always original. One night, pretending to be afraid of the threatened Clôture, he looked across at the Prime Minister, and lifting his hands toward the ceiling, paraphrasing the Roman gladiatorial formula, rolled out in a sonorous brogue: "Great Cæsar! We who are about to die, salute you." At the conclusion of one of his elaborate orations in defence of the Parnellite policy, he laid hold of a tumbler of water and bowing in the direction of the Treasury Bench drained it off to the toast: "Here's long life and good health to the Irish National Land League." And an honourable member having on another occasion described the Land Bill as "a measure of confiscation," he said, "confiscation would do good if it obliged the landlords to earn their living by the practice of some honest employment, such as digging the soil, or carrying a musket at a shilling a day. Then they would no longer grow fat, racing, and chasing, and sporting."

The Reverend Isaac Nelson, M.P. for Mayo, an ex-Presbyterian minister of Belfast, is the possessor of a truly wonderful oratorical style. A man of middle height and somewhat powerful build, with a large, broad head, sparse white hair, and keen, strongly-marked features. In spite of his spectacles, clerical garments, and regulation white tie, he looks full of fight. His maiden effort in the House was one of the events of the session of 1880. What with the Greek tragedians, the Latin poets, and Bishop Berkeley, Mr Nelson was at no loss for illustrations. "If hon. gentlemen would visit the afflicted districts of Ireland they would return with a tear upon their cheek, but without a copper in their pocket." In such strain he pleaded, intoned, rhapso-

dised, and very nearly wept. It was thought that when the hon. and rev. gentleman quoted a "beautiful hymn" that he was about to draw nigh to a close, but he addressed "you, Mr Chairman," a little longer, concluding with a picture of "the women of Ireland, covered with dripping gore, resisting the evictions of a tyrant constabulary." The good old man, accustomed to thunder anathemas from his pulpit against the sins of the congregation—unanswered and unopposed—seemed surprised at his reception, made up of ironical cheers and scornful laughter. He made a few fugitive efforts to convert the Commons to look at Irish politics from his persfervid point of view, and then quietly subsided. Since which he has renounced Mr Parnell and all his works, and has ceased to attend the sittings of the House.

Mr Nelson as a Parliamentarian lacked the quality of dogged resistance which has so often sustained Mr Callan in moments of difficulty and danger, and, moreover, what some might consider disgrace. Mr Callan, who has been sixteen years in Parliament, formerly sat for Dundalk as a Liberal and moderate Home Ruler. A man of ability, but extremely self-willed and apparently utterly without tact, he is nevertheless accomplished in all the arts of obstruction, and has several times been named from the Chair and suspended. Yet he bears no malice, and will retire—on compulsion—kissing his hand to Mr Speaker with an astonishing lightheartedness. His often elaborate explanations and apologies appear as if intended to aggravate the original cause of offence.

Mr Sexton, journalist, is a different kind of man from Mr Callan; though an ardent Home Ruler and determined Parnellite, he seeks to persuade by force of

argument, rather than to deter by invective, or to surprise the auditor with passionate outbursts of high-flown diction. His speeches are well reasoned and exhaustive essays; and one-half his talent would make the fortune of a Junior Lord of the Treasury. And the same may be said of Mr Justin M'Carthy, an accomplished historian and delightful novelist. Both are able, solid politicians. Mr Sexton's speeches are, however, inordinately long; and Mr M'Carthy, Mr Parnell's second in command, speaks frequently and at length in tones as of a muffled drum. Indeed, too many of the Parnellites use the measure of length as the standard of eloquence. I remember Mr M'Coan, barrister and journalist, after speaking for the space of two hours, excusing himself for not addressing the impatient assembly further on the ground that he was not a practised orator. Mr J. E. Redmond, law student—a good looking youth—and conjointly with Mr Sheil, a Parnellite Whip, speaks fluently and in well-chosen language, but generally takes an hour to deal with a matter which might easily be disposed of in five minutes. He does not at all resemble the gentleman from Ireland who knew how to formulate his ideas in the fewest possible words, and who said, very candidly: "The Irish people"—meaning the disaffected among them—"don't want coercion, don't want law, and don't want police." Mr J. E. Redmond's younger brother, Mr H. K. Redmond, is also a Parnellite member. The brothers have lately returned from Australia, where they tried, though not with much success, to stir up the Irish colonists to hatred of England.

Mr Arthur O'Connor must be reckoned among Mr Parnell's most valuable lieutenants. Originally a clerk in the War Office, he is now the statistician of the party.

Clear-headed, patient, a thorough arithmetician and a lucid debater, Mr Arthur O'Connor is great on points of order, and as a critic of the Irish estimates. Nothing with the appearance of a job escapes his keen vision and unflinching courage. He is not to be put down by any amount of real or affected contempt, but returns again and again to the charge—masterful, accurate, unconquerable. He is of more use to his party in the House of Commons than a dozen mere ready speakers, and much more damaging to his opponents. Mr Arthur O'Connor and Mr Healy undertake the task of draughting Bills for the party.

When Mr Parnell assumed the reins of leadership he was at first intimately associated with Mr F. H. O'Donnell, journalist, and Mr O'Connor Power, now a barrister of the Inner Temple; and, with the assistance of Mr Biggar as well, this nucleus of a party practised obstruction as a fine art. Mr Butt and his following of temperate Home Rulers were opposed to that system of tactics; and quarrels and recriminations ensued, only ending with the death of Mr Butt, and the formal constitution of Mr Parnell as head of a party of irreconcilables. After the General Election of 1880, Mr Mitchell Henry, Major Nolan, Mr Errington, Mr Shaw, and the rest of the moderate Home Rulers, took up a position on the Liberal side below the gangway, and the Parnellites went into opposition. Colonel Nolan has, however, by desire of his constituents, again crossed the floor, and now sits among the irreconcilables.

In course of time Mr O'Donnell and Mr O'Connor Power seemed to waver somewhat in their allegiance to Mr Parnell, and their quondam leader associated himself with two other active lieutenants, Mr T. P. O'Connor and Mr Healy, both journalists, and ready,

tireless speakers—extremely clever young men. Mr Healy is dark, short, and thin. Mr T. P. O'Connor is dark, tall, and not thin. Mr O'Connor rejoices in a rich, juicy brogue, a daring spirit, and a flowery style. Mr Healy has a less full-flavoured Hibernian accent, but his manner is rough to aggressiveness. Mr Healy is, however, one of the best debaters in the House, never misses a point, and says brilliant, spiteful things with evident relish. He was among the very few members who mastered the complicated clauses of the Land Bill in its passage through the Commons; and, though fierce and rude, has made a distinct mark. In the event of Mr Parnell's retirement, Mr Healy would be the fit person intellectually to lead the irreconcilable Irish at St Stephens. Both he and Mr T. P. O'Connor are prepared, at a moment's notice, to go anywhere or do anything at the bidding of their powerful chief. Mr Healy graduated as Mr Parnell's private secretary, and rendered him valuable clerical assistance in one of his tours through the United States, and Mr T. P. O'Connor has also worked for the cause in America as a diligent and stirring platform orator.

The majority of the Parnellites are soldiers, lawyers, literary men, and traders—Messrs Macfarlane, MacMahon, Richard Power, Sheil, Synan, and W. H. K. Redmond being exceptions to the rule. Mr Gabbett was formerly in the 10th Hussars and 2nd Life Guards, Mr O'Beirne in the 2nd Dragoon Guards, and Mr O'Kelly,—now employed as a war correspondent in the Soudan,—formerly held a commission in the French army. Mr Daly and Mr O'Sullivan are merchants, Messrs Marum, Metge, and Molloy, barristers. Mr Kenny, a student at Gray's Inn, Mr Corbet, a poet, Mr Leamy, a solicitor, Mr Edward Duyer Gray, proprietor of the Dublin *Free-*

man, and Mr O'Brien, a journalist. Of these, Mr Gray is the most grave and weighty politician, and Mr O'Brien, of *United Ireland*, the most violent partizan. Mr Patrick Egan, formerly treasurer of the Land League, an out-and-out Parnellite, is not and never has been in Parliament. Since the beginning of the session of 1884, Mr William Meagher has taken the place of Mr Metge, Mr J. Deasy has succeeded Mr Daly, and Mr M'Mahon Mr O'Shaughnessy.

In the rapid march of events, men are apt to forget the extreme youthfulness of Parnellism as a political force. At the beginning of the year 1879, the Home Rule Party was, as we have seen, all but broken up. It was certainly divided into two camps, led respectively by Mr Butt and Mr Parnell, the former being for steady constitutional agitation, the other going for more extreme measures, especially for obstructing the business of the House of Commons. Mr Butt, Mr Mitchell-Henry, and their friends in and out of Parliament, pulled one way, Mr Devoy, Mr Michael Davitt, Mr Dillon, and the rest hauling in a different direction. Davitt, however, who had turned his back on Fenianism, apparently once for all, was casting about to find a new method of "saving" his country.

At that time great distress prevailed in Ireland, in midst of which "the three F's"—that is to say, fixity of tenure, fair rent, and free sale, the watchwords of the Irish land reformers—were to be merged in the programme of the Land League, which Association Mr Davitt originated as a means to the end he had in view, and was joined by Mr Parnell. The League undertook to fight the famine; and with the assistance of the Duchess of Marlborough's and the Mansion House Relief Funds, did assuredly succeed in keeping

the wolf from the door. It is said that the Fenians abhorred the League, but it is to be feared that some of the subscriptions which swelled its coffers, came from Fenian sympathisers in the United States.

Meanwhile, the League did not lose sight of the land question. Its orators had already advised the tenants not to pay rent beyond Griffith's valuation, and at the dissolution of Parliament in March 1880, the leaders held a conference, and put forth a strong and sounding programme—the death-knell of the old system of Irish landlordism.

The result of the General Election of 1880 placed Mr Parnell at the head of a compact body of adventurous and resolute men, determined either to obtain vast concessions from the Liberal Government, or so to obstruct the business of the House of Commons, as to make ordinary national legislation difficult to the point of impossibility. Mr Gladstone was willing, indeed, eager to do a great deal for them, but not all that they required, consequently they raised "scenes," and after turning the House into "a bear garden," found themselves stopped by the Speaker's *coup d'état* of February 1881, and the passage of the Clôture in the autumn of 1882.

Notwithstanding signs of disaffection in Ireland, the present Government were at first disinclined to adopt coercive measures, hoping to satisfy the discontented tenants with the benefits of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, which passed the Commons, and was thrown out by the Lords in August 1880, but not before the appointment of the Bessborough Commission to report on the working of the Irish Land Act of 1870.

When, shortly after Parliament rose, Ireland was in a state of scarcely suppressed anarchy and tumult, Mr

Parnell and his followers made many violent speeches. Crime increased. Lord Mountmorres was shot dead in Galway. Troops were poured into Ireland. The Parnellites retorted with the invention of Boycotting. The Land League was prosecuted, and the prosecution failed—miserably.

Besides the Bessborough Commission, another Committee of Inquiry, appointed by the Conservatives in 1879, reported to the Government on the state of Ireland. The former approved, while the latter condemned the three F's. It was partly on the recommendation of the Bessborough Commission, that Mr Gladstone framed his Land Act.

During the year 1881, the Government carried the Coercion and Arms Acts as well as the Land Act, all arising out of the Parnellite agitation. The avowed Liberal policy was first to restore order in Ireland, and then to yield almost in full to the demands of agitation, which demands the Government conscientiously believed to be fair and right.

It will be for posterity to say whether the Lords were justified in throwing out the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, and subsequently accepting the Land Act. This much, however, must be patent to every unbiassed mind, that had the first been allowed to pass, the second would have been delayed, probably not even mooted for years to come. Nor can it be denied that the Land League was at first an engine of constitutional agitation. Subsequently the Parnellites winked at, if they did not encourage crimes of violence. Then, not before, Mr Gladstone's Government broke up the League, imprisoned the leaders, and afterwards let them out under the informal negotiation of Kilmainham, resulting directly in the retirement of Mr Forster

from the Ministry, and indirectly in the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr Burke.

The triumph of Mr Parnell, as acknowledged chief of a consolidated party strong enough to wring from the British nation privileges for Ireland undreamed of by the first Home Rulers, was now complete.

Whether or not Parnellism will succeed in carrying out its openly avowed programme,—that is to say, whether it will obtain the abrogation of the Union and the re-establishment of a separate Parliament in Dublin, remains to be seen. Such a result would be consistent with the aspirations of the original Home Rulers, and put the seal of success on the machinations of Fenianism and the dark doings of the Invincibles. The oft-suggested establishment of County Government in Ireland points to a move in the direction indicated. Are we then tending toward a mere federal union of the constituent atoms which go to make up Great Britain and her Colonies? More unlikely events have happened in the history of the world.

We laugh at the eccentricities and extravagances of Mr Parnell's following, grow angry at their aggressiveness, and fret beneath their obstructive tactics. But to coerce and imprison them one day, and comply with their demands, however seemingly outrageous, the next, is not the way to keep the kingdom inviolate. The Parnellites are an ambitious, daring, active, able faction, imbued with far-reaching ideas. Parnellism is a reforming combination, indifferent to obloquy, and not likely to be appeased with sops flung by an ever retreating enemy. The Nation ought therefore to make up its mind whether the solidarity of Great Britain and Ireland, at least, be worth preserving, and at what cost? If the universal popular voice approve the doctrine of

Home Rule, well and good. But that the question should be allowed to remain open, or that Conservative or Liberal chiefs should flirt with Parnellism—in the hope to oust the other side from office—would be a grave reproach to our system of Government by party, and a sure and certain method of disintegrating the Empire.

CHAPTER VIII.

OBSTRUCTION RAMPANT.

THE TWENTY-TWO HOURS' SITTING.

WE have seen how the Parnellites, following the example set by the Liberals in the affair of the South Africa Bill, and of the Conservatives on the questions of the Irish Church and Land Law Legislation, had learned to depend on open obstruction as their most effective weapon of offence. We have now to take part in the culmination and downfall of that vexatious and troublesome system.

The session of 1880 had been stormy and garrulous, so much so, indeed, that an honourable member gave formal notice to the effect that in view of the loss of time thus occasioned it would be proper to consider the desirability of limiting speeches to seven minutes' duration. And Mr Forster laid his finger on the probable origin of the embittered strife in pointing out that the difference between the Parnellites and the Government was that while the former desired to delay or prevent the payment of rent, the latter only wished to secure the property of the tenant. But none of the squalls which attended the passage of the ill-fated Compensation for Disturbance Bill through the Commons equalled either in violence or protracted tempestuousness the shocking exhibitions witnessed during the following year.

Parliament met on January 6, on which day a furious gale of wind rushed and roared along the reaches of the river and tore with terrible force through the streets. Mr Forster at once gave notice of the Irish Coercion and Arms Bills, and the Parnellites retorted with a note of defiance. The Address in reply to the Queen's Speech was not agreed to until the 20th of the month.

During that entire period the weather outside was bitterly inclement, and though all the devices of obstruction were strained in the interests of delay, at times the attendance within the Chamber appeared ridiculously small. This was particularly notable as the contentious, long-drawn and oft-adjourned debate began to show signs of failing energy. On the night of the 18th, the snow lay thick upon the ground, the tempest shrieked, and the tide rushed wildly between bridges. Within the Chamber only a few complaining Home Rulers vexed the ear. It was remarked that night that the strangers in their gallery outnumbered the members on the floor.

Mr Justin M'Carthy's amendment to the Address was in the following words: "Humbly to pray Her Majesty to refrain from using the naval, military, and constabulary forces of the Crown in enforcing ejectments for non-payment of rent in Ireland, until the measures proposed to be submitted to Her Majesty, with regard to the ownership of land in Ireland, have been decided upon by Parliament."

To that amendment and its accompanying observations, the Premier, in course of a powerful speech, indignantly remarked that the mover proposed to "insult the Throne." This was strong language, but not stronger than what was to follow. It was understood from the first that the Prime Minister would reply to Mr

M'Carthy's amendment, but it was scarcely imagined that he would rise at once, or almost immediately adopt an angry tone. That the line thus taken by the Premier and followed up by the Speaker was not anticipated may be inferred from the fact, that for several hours the House remained comparatively empty. Moreover, Mr Gladstone's speech was much shorter than might have been expected. There seemed in the entire situation—highly dramatic as it proved to be—an element of surprise. Mr Parnell and his lieutenants consulted eagerly together, and passed in and out of the side door of the House, under the left gallery, as if uncertain what tactics to adopt in dealing with the determined onslaught of the head of the Government, and the plainly manifested determination of the Speaker, to keep the debate rigidly within the lines of the subject under discussion. Mr M'Carthy stated his case cleverly, but in a husky voice and with a monotony of gesture which belongs to that hon. gentleman's eminently subdued style of oratory. Yet, even while he was doing his best to give a plausible complexion to his argument, Lord Hartington and Mr Gladstone sat conversing together. Very soon he went wide of the mark, and then the first blow was struck. Mr Speaker rose and pointed out to him that the question before the House was limited in its nature, and that he would place himself distinctly out of order if he followed up his attempt to travel over the whole ground of the Irish programme.

At the very first Mr Gladstone's manner was subdued. Looking across the floor of the House to where the Home Rulers sat clustered together, he expressed a hope that, as this was the eighth night, the debate in reply to the Address was approaching, and rapidly approaching, a conclusion—a sentiment cheered by the

House generally, including Members to whom it was more particularly addressed, and in whose cry of approval the practised ear might detect a touch of bitter irony. As he proceeded, the First Lord of the Treasury displayed increasing fervour; until, once more turning to the Home Rulers, he asked them in angry tones to say for what purpose an executive Government exists if it is not to enforce the law? Then, facing the Speaker, Mr Gladstone addressed that high functionary with the reminder that a more extraordinary proposition had never been submitted to Parliament than that contained in the amendment of the Member for Longford—and it was then that he made use of the extraordinary expression already referred to, that it was “an insult to the Throne, and a demand to the Queen to forswear her coronation oath.” The Premier had at length struck the heroic spark, and kindled the enthusiasm of his auditory. Right and left of the Speaker, from chair to bar, all but the few malcontents, with one voice proclaimed their approval of his words. Once Mr Justin M’Carthy rose to a point of order, to make an explanation; but, in spite of the practice of debate, the time was not fit, and the Prime Minister beckoned him to sit down, promising that he should be heard later on.

Lord John Manners having spoken a few approving sentences on behalf of the Opposition, there rose from a back bench, far away from the Speaker on the left, Mr Dillon—no longer in the House—a fiery patriot, but an unready orator. Such language as that uttered by Mr Dillon is happily strange to Parliament. Disregarding the cries for a division which greeted his opening sentence, he told the House that if he had his way in Ireland matters would be settled differently. He knew

the temper of that Assembly, he said, and he knew nothing more humiliating than to have to address them on behalf of justice to Ireland. From the first Mr Dillon infringed the bounds of order, and soon the Speaker, unsolicited, reminded him of the fact. He was informed that his line of argument was not relevant to the amendment. For a while Mr Dillon continued in the course against which he had been warned from the Chair, until Sir Henry Tyler called the attention of the House to the "treasonable and traitorous sentiments" of the "Member for Tipperary." Then, once again, the Speaker reminded him that he was transgressing the rules of debate. Following the lead of Sir Henry Tyler, Mr Newdegate waited the opportunity of a pause in Mr Dillon's irrelevant harangue, and asked, on a point of order, to be allowed to call attention to a few of his "treasonable utterances."

Though events followed with rapidity, the House displayed great restraint and forbearance. Nevertheless Mr Dillon called upon the Speaker to protect him from interruption, and in reply received an answer which ought not to have surprised him. "If the honourable member," said Mr Speaker, with studied coldness, "confines himself to the question before the House, he will not be interrupted by any other Member."

The position to which Mr Dillon had by his violence reduced himself was pitiable, so much so that a good-natured member on the Liberal benches called out, "O, let him go on!" Mr Speaker, however, was not minded to be defied. "I must insist on the Honourable Member keeping to the question before the House," said he, and there was an emphasis on the word "insist" which even the Member for Tipperary dared not disregard.

Mr Newdegate next formally took Mr Dillon to task. Several times Mr Healy attempted to interrupt the Member for North Warwickshire; and every time he was put down by the Speaker with a gentle but firm hand. As for Mr Parnell, he very soon showed, to adopt the words of Sir Stafford Northcote, that he looked upon himself as "an equal power competing with the power of the Crown." With cool defiance he told the Government that the first man arrested after the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act would be the signal for the suspension of the payment of all rent in Ireland, and for the organisation of secret societies.

Mr Gladstone had by this time quitted the House, and the leadership had been temporarily assumed by Lord Hartington, but no member of the Government replied to the daring and threatening language of the Member for the city of Cork. That task was, however, cheerfully undertaken by the Leader of the Opposition, Ministers excusing themselves on the ground that enough, and more than enough, had been said.

Mr T. P. O'Connor, however, would not view the matter in that light, and referred to the "cheek" of Ministers, an expression which Mr Warton—who a few nights previously had described Mr Forster as "funky"—declared to be unparliamentary. Mr O'Connor, nothing daunted, denounced the conduct of the Premier, whom he accused of fostering a spirit of ill-feeling against the Irish members,—a sentiment which Lord Hartington, in declining to accede to a motion for adjournment, admitted to exist, and to include the elements of growth. The reproof of the noble Marquis was received with shouts of accord.

At one o'clock in the morning Mr Parnell strove to stem the uproar which sought, but in vain, to drown the

yet more clamorous voices of the gentlemen from Ireland. Still later the Speaker took advantage of a momentary pause to put the question for adjournment, just as Mr Biggar, prepared to speak, was being pulled back upon his seat by a fellow Home Ruler. In the end, after a division which gave Ministers a large majority, Lord Hartington assented to an adjournment of the debate.

The Address, after much further angry discussion having been disposed of, Mr Forster, on the evening of January 24th, introduced his Bill for the better protection of person and property in Ireland, in a speech of a little more than an hour and a half's duration. With the exception of a few rude interruptions from the younger members of the Home Rule Party, the Irish Secretary was heard with profound attention, and was applauded by the Conservatives with a degree of heartiness seldom vouchsafed by the Opposition to a Ministerial speaker.

Mr Parnell was not present to lead his supporters in this their first hour of tribulation. It was, however, expected that he would return from Dublin in time to be present in his place in Parliament the same night. Meanwhile Mr Justin M'Carthy acted as his lieutenant. Mr Forster's statement made an impression upon the Home Rulers which they did not apparently attempt to conceal. The majority of them sat with grave, anxious faces and eager eyes directed towards the Irish Secretary, and now and again, when he pointed his finger scornfully at them and raised his voice in denunciation of their tactics, some—the more timid—winced, while others affected to laugh ironically.

The House had been all attention the moment that Mr Forster rose. With the unrestrained manner of one addressing a company of friends in a private room, he

excused himself for trespassing at length on the time of the Assembly. It was, however, necessary, he said, to prove justification for the course decided on by the Government, and that could only be done by quoting a number of outrages from official information. He sought to show that persons and property were not protected, and that life was not safe in Ireland, and went on deliberately with his task.

Some laughter was created by the relation of an anecdote concerning a man who was summoned before the Land League for "the offence of paying his rent." As, however, the person in question was able to prove that, although he had paid something it had not exceeded Griffith's valuation, he was honourably acquitted. The narration of this story amused the Home Rulers, who manifested their approval of the conduct of the League.

In an instant the Irish Secretary saw and seized upon his opportunity. "Yes," he cried, now for the first time lifting his voice above its ordinary colloquial tone, "it is a perfect reign of terror, and no one has authority but the Land League." The stroke was well timed and rapidly delivered. It told immensely. Mr Healy jumped up to interfere, but he could not be heard. From right and left the House roared him down. Four times he essayed to speak, and each time his voice was drowned in shouts of disapproval. Mr Forster alone seemed willing to listen to what he had to say. Mr Arthur O'Connor also tried to interrupt, but did not fare much better than his colleague.

With each succeeding attempt to disconcert him, Mr Forster gained in vigour. As he poured forth sentence upon sentence, he grew more and more accusatory and dominant in tone. "Those who break the law are safe, but the honest are in danger," he cried; and then his

phrases rose and fell upon the ear in regular cadence, and with the rugged swing of an unaffected rhythm. He raised his head, and, facing the Home Rule Benches, called across the floor, his right hand outstretched and his fore-finger pointed at some imaginary miscreants, "It is these men, these Fenians, these Ribbonmen who strike terror. What, then, must we do? We must strike terror into them. We must arrest these criminals!" No wonder that the Home Rulers were silent, no wonder that they looked astonished. For such a shout arose—so loud and deep in volume, so menacing in tone—as had not been heard in Parliament for many a day.

Overcome by the excitement of the occasion, Mr Forster went on in a more subdued tone of voice. This was not lost on some of the Irishmen, one or two of whom called out, "Speak up." The move was, however, futile. Thus appealed to, the Minister did speak up, and to some effect. "I say," he exclaimed, "we must take power to arrest these men and keep them in prison." One by one the Irish Secretary explained the clauses of the Bill, including its intended duration until Sept. 30, 1882. It would give the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland power to imprison any suspected person for eighteen months without trial. But, said Mr Forster, whatever is done will be done in the full glare of public opinion; and the alternative was to subject Ireland to the rule of ruffianism.

The Home Rulers now well within his clutch, Mr Forster did not spare them. As he unfolded his scheme of coercion he whipped the Parnellite members with scornful words, and threatened the Land League with condign punishment. As he grew in resolution, the House applauded him more and more, not from one place alone, but from every part. It is not often that

Mr Forster is heard to so much advantage. Toward the last he expressed sorrow for the necessity which seemed to make him harsh. Had he known that his Irish policy would have come to this he would rather have resigned office; had he dreamed that twenty years of Parliamentary life would find him introducing a Coercion Act for Ireland he could wish to have retired from the House. That Bill should be followed by a just and liberal measure dealing with the land. But the Coercion Bill must be passed, and passed at once—a determination approved by the leaders of the Opposition.

After midnight Mr O'Donnell might have been heard instructing the Cabinet in their duties, and telling them what he would do if it had fallen to him to direct the Councils of the State. As for Mr Forster—said the member for Dungarvon—he preferred to sacrifice the rights of the Irish people and say “Amen to the Greco-Oriental prayers of the Prime Minister,” whom he described as “a traitor to his country.”

Mr Labouchere moved the adjournment.

Next day the Speaker had taken the chair, the mace had been laid on the table, prayers had been said, and even the stranger admitted within the gates, when Mr Biggar marched up the floor laden with Blue Books and copious memoranda. All eyes were turned upon the member for Cavan as he spread out his manuscript like a low fortified wall of extracts round about him, flanked with bastions of Blue Books. Industrious and methodically the hon. member sorted, chose and rejected from his many parcels, and at length, when order had been evolved out of chaos, Mr Biggar, looking grave while others smiled, marched solemnly through the doorway into the lobby, leaving behind him that silent evidence of a speech to come.

For a moment the fate of the Ministerial proposition to set aside all business in favour of the Coercion and Land Bills trembled in the balance. Mr Gladstone had already risen to propose a motion of precedence, from day to day, for his Irish measures; but before the Ministerial cheers which greeted him had subsided, Mr Gray, from Dublin, stood up to a point of order. With the manner of a man anxious above every other consideration for the due preservation of the etiquette of debate, Mr Gray wished to explain that the proposition of the Premier might possibly be irregular, inasmuch as the words of the motion assumed that there would be several stages of the Government Bills, whereas those bills were not even before the House, and if the request for leave to bring them in met with an adverse answer, Ministers, and hon. members generally, would find themselves in a quandary. Mr Gladstone grew more than ordinarily serious, and gentlemen from Ireland brightened up at the ingenious casuistry of Mr Gray. What if the Government were beaten back on their first advance? The gladness of the Home Rulers was, however, short-lived; for there and then, to the relief of the row of anxious Cabinet Ministers, and the freely expressed approval of a large majority, it was laid down by the Chair that the phraseology of the resolution was regular and in order, and did not call for alteration or emendation.

Mr Gladstone now appeared as if it were possible to convince him that the Government measures might have been differently placed before the House, in order of precedence. It was best, he inferred, to keep cool and look at the matter in every possible light. It was not for him to stop free discussion, so that it "was kept within the bounds of usage." But, he significantly sug-

gested, the shorter the debate the sooner would the judgment of Parliament be taken as to which of the Government Bills should be brought on first. At that period, whenever reference was made to waste of public time, the House showed an appreciation of the aptness of the observation, and it did so on this occasion when Mr Gladstone referred, with good-humoured contempt, to "the crop of amendments on the paper, all sown by the busy hand of gentlemen sitting within a narrow precinct of this House."

Many private members on both sides heard with manifest concern that the Government intended to take from them Tuesdays, and especially Wednesdays, until further notice. To the sound of laughter, the First Lord of the Treasury said that he and his colleagues did not intend to adjourn Irish questions from Mondays to Thursdays, while "fresh crops of speeches were being germinated." He hoped, in spite of the amendments on the paper, that Irish members would accede to his motion with promptitude. That invitation to peace was, however, received with so many and such oft repeated shakes of the head from the quarter where sat the Parnellites, under the temporary leadership of Mr Justin M'Carthy, that Mr Gladstone learned immediately what sort of reception his motion was about to meet with.

The absence of Mr Parnell was keenly felt by the gentleman whom he had left in charge. The Member for Cork had placed the first amendment on the paper, to the effect that the state of Ireland did not afford justification for the motion of Mr Gladstone with respect to public business. Mr T. P. O'Connor made a futile attempt to father Mr Parnell's amendment, but was quickly stopped by the Speaker, and when he tried to

fence with the House by proposing a similar amendment in his own name he was equally unsuccessful. Having, however, come prepared to make a speech, the hon. member was not to be baulked by any indisposition on the part of the House to hear him. He made light of the alleged outrages in Ireland, and when an hon. member on the Radical benches called out "How about murder?" Mr T. P. O'Connor treated the interruption with well-affected indifference. Mr Finigan having been called to order four times, and Mr Milbank having proposed that he be no more heard—a proposition which the Speaker did not act upon—interruptions soon became the feature of the debate, which was carried on with more or less disregard of propriety until a not unprovoked catastrophe befell Mr Biggar.

An hour before the Member for Cavan rose, at half-past eight o'clock, to carry out his silent threat of addressing the House, Mr Arthur O'Connor, apparently not knowing what else to do in the absence of Mr Parnell, had moved that the House do pass to the orders of the day. That proposal proving futile, Mr Biggar's speech had to be made. Mr Biggar suggested that if the Government were determined to put down free discussion they should bring in what bills they pleased, and not suffer any others to be introduced. Then hon. members might get home by eight o'clock in the evening, and be spared the prevalent late hours and consequent fatigue. He talked of many things besides the question at issue, and always in a tone of banter, as if wilful obstruction were the best of good jokes. Several hon. members called him to order from different parts of the House; but he proceeded, indifferent to danger. And time after time the Speaker

warned him that he was transgressing the rules of debate. It was not that the Member for Cavan appeared desirous of defying the authority of the Chair, but rather as if the practice of disorder had become with him confirmed into a habit, and that he could not, if he would, keep to the question.

At length Mr Speaker's voice sounded with an ominous sternness, and it seemed as if a "scene" would occur in a thin House. Seven Ministers were present, but only four of their supporters sat immediately behind them. The regular Conservative benches held only one man; though several Parnellites were in their places. Indeed, had it not been for the Radicals the House might have been counted out with ease. The word, however, went forth to the lobbies and other adjacent parts that Mr Biggar was likely to get into trouble, and the assembly soon changed its appearance. Still Mr Biggar could not or would not see the danger ahead, still he would banter the House and disregard the ruling of the Chair, until at length the fatal bolt fell, and he was expelled for the remainder of the sitting.

No sooner had Mr Biggar been named from the Chair, than Mr Forster, in the absence of Mr Gladstone, stepping quickly to the despatch box, moved, amid great commotion, that the Hon. Member for Cavan be suspended. Short, sharp cries of "Hear, hear!" mingled with an angry roar of "Noes" from the Parnellites, who were by this time considerably reinforced in numbers, sounded through the chamber. When, however, Mr Speaker rose the din subsided, and the question was put to be followed by another demonstration. "Ayes to the right and Noes to the left," said Mr Speaker, as calmly as if a division for suspension were an every day occurrence, "tellers for the Ayes

Lord Kensington and Lord Richard Grosvenor ; tellers for the Noes Mr Finigan and Mr Sexton." Meanwhile all available members, who had been within the precincts of the House, not actually within the bar, were trooping up the floor to swell the division and assist in the result, whereby Mr Biggar was suspended from the service of the House for the remainder of the day by a vote of 160 to 30.

Mr Biggar may have his faults, but he is not shy ; and, when the rest of the Members returned, he came along with them, still clutching to his bosom his beloved blue-books. It chanced that Mr Speaker's eye was upon Mr Biggar as he sat down calmly in his place, placid and smiling, and that august official immediately required him, in pursuance of the vote of the House, to withdraw. "Withdraw, withdraw," shouted a chorus of angry voices. Mr Biggar for the moment seemed uncertain what to do, but presently rose, and making his way through the crowd of Members gathered within the portal of the House, went slowly out, side by side, with the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Mr Healy very nearly shared the fate of Mr Biggar. He had taken up a temporary position on the front Opposition bench below the gangway, whence—in a voice angered beyond control—he moved the adjournment of the debate. Looking across to where the Radicals sat in great force, he cried out, "You English like to deal with minorities. You have never dared to face your match." After several ineffectual attempts the Speaker finally quelled Mr Healy, but not before he had congratulated Mr Gladstone on it not having fallen to the lot of the right hon. gentleman to be the "executioner of Mr Biggar." Mr Justin M'Carthy tried to explain, and even seconded the motion for adjournment,

but the House, grown far more than ordinarily impatient, would not be charmed by the historian and novelist, charmed he never so mildly. Whereupon Mr M'Carthy, having been called to order more than once, discreetly sat down. The choice of the Speaker now lay between Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr Arthur Arnold, and Mr O'Donnell; and the last named, being called upon, responded in florid and lengthened periods, and was replied to in a humorous speech by Mr Gladstone. Several motions on the same tack were likewise negatived. Mr Healy had spoken—metaphorically—of Mr Biggar as having been “executed” by the Treasury Bench. When, however, Members upon the floor cast their eyes upward to the Strangers' Gallery, there, on the very hindmost bench, close to the attendant, sat Mr Biggar, an apparently well-contented spectator of the “scene” raging below.

It had been manifest for several hours that the object of the Obstructives was to carry on the talk until half-past twelve, at which time it would be too late to bring on the Coercion Bill. When that time therefore arrived, Mr Gladstone, in a severe speech, declined to accede to the request for an adjournment of the debate, and was supported in his determination by Sir Stafford Northcote; and lest there should be any doubt left in the minds of gentlemen from Ireland, Sir William Harcourt desired explicitly to inform the Obstructionists that the Government meant to continue the debate on the motion for leave to bring in the Peace Preservation Bill “until it is finally disposed of.”

Mr Gladstone, who early bore signs of fatigue, nevertheless stuck manfully to his post until two o'clock in the morning, when he retired, and did not return until an hour and a half before noon. Meanwhile the Chief-

Secretary and Solicitor-General for Ireland supported the Home Secretary and the head of the Department of Education. During the middle of the night Ministers were represented by the English Law Officers of the Crown, the Chief Commissioner of Works, and Mr Grant Duff. Loud cheers arose when Lord Hartington, who had gone away to get a short spell of sleep, returned to his place at about seven A.M. Many of the Opposition leaders remained at their posts, and the Fourth Party, numerically unimportant, were never all together absent at the same time. The greatest physical strain was undoubtedly on the gentlemen from Ireland, who had proved in former conflicts of a similar kind that they were not easily to be beaten in wakefulness. During the night Lord Randolph Churchill made an occasional raid upon the discussion in defence of order and the authority of the Chair; but it was not until one o'clock next day that Mr Gorst, speaking on behalf of those with whom he acts, made a set speech, in which he took Ministers to task for their conduct of the business of the House. "We have," said he, "practically effaced ourselves during this session." And he went on to say that the Fourth Party had adopted their line of action in deference to the expressed wishes of Sir Stafford Northcote, and in face of the fact that Mr Forster had claimed emergency for Irish questions. If therefore, time had been wasted the fault did not lie with them. He feared, however, that Ministers were to blame.

For fourteen hours the Speaker occupied the chair, and then, overcome with fatigue, temporarily resigned his post to the Chairman of Committees. At about the same time as Mr Gladstone re-entered the House, there came in together Mr Parnell and Mr Forster, at sight

of the first of whom the irreconcilables raised a jubilant cheer, which was defiantly taken up and re-echoed from all parts of the assembly. During Dr Playfair's occupancy of the chair he had no slight difficulty in keeping order. By dint of mixed firmness and persuasion he did, however, succeed, if not completely, in his endeavour. The Parnellites more than once contended that if they were to be restrained from the free expression of their opinions perhaps it would be better to cut them off from all participation in the debates. According to Mr Healy, for whom great consideration was shown by the House, some latitude ought to be allowed to his countrymen under the peculiar circumstances of their position. If they were to be subjected to constant calls to order, he said, why not silence them at once?

The appearance of the House at noon of the second day was remarkable. Few seats were unoccupied, and from the Peers' Gallery Lord Spencer witnessed the heated debate. The Strangers' Gallery—where Mr Biggar still sat aloft, waiting at the gates of a parliamentary paradise, whence he had been, for the time being, banished—was crowded to overflowing. Full advantage had been taken of their privileges by the outside public admitted to a resting place high above the clock, and some of them had remained all night. A poor quality of daylight filtered, as with an effort, through the painted windows, but could not altogether conquer the gloom of a foggy mid-day. The atmosphere was heated and heavy; it dried the skin and parched the lips. Along the two lines of benches skirting the red-bordered matting, the floor was strewn with white paper torn up into small fragments, and with the yellow envelopes of countless telegrams, and with stray

sheets of the orders and notices of motion of the day previous. The table of the House, with its rows of works of reference, usually neatly kept, presented a mass of confusion. Those among the members who had enjoyed a night's sleep looked fresh and well, while such as had sat out the vigil showed only too plainly the signs of the struggle. The Treasury bench and the front Opposition bench now once more held a goodly complement of chiefs, only Lord Hartington and Mr Bright being absent from their places.

Although side issues cropped up during the course of the debate, the main battle, of twenty-two hours' duration, was practically fought out on Mr Gladstone's resolution that the Bill for the Protection of Person and Property in Ireland and the Peace Preservation Bill should take precedence of every other form of business from day to day. Needless to say that the Home Rulers made strenuous endeavours to widen the scope of the discussion, and to introduce all sorts of irrelevant matter. Nor must it be supposed that the benches were well occupied during the entire sitting. For several hours the attendance probably averaged about seventy members ; and as fresh relays of legislators appeared upon the scene, after snatches of slumber, their friends and partisans cheered them heartily ; and on the whole the spirit of the proceedings was wonderfully well sustained. The first division for the adjournment of the House took place half-an-hour after midnight. Another division was taken on a similar motion at four o'clock in the morning, in which the Government gained a victory of 135 in a house of 183 members, many of whom were not actually present in the Chamber when the bells rang. By nine o'clock the Government majority had fallen to 104, and there were three defections from

the Hibernian ranks. The final division on the main question showed 251 for the Government against 33 for the Parnellites.

The most remarkable speech of the sitting was undoubtedly that made by Mr Joseph Cowen, who rose about one o'clock in the afternoon. Mr Cowen had been home to bed, and returned to his duties full of strength and vigour. His voice sounded with singular freshness through the jaded assembly, and whatever may have been the intention of the hon. gentleman, it brought new courage, and brightening hopes to the Obstructives. Conservative members once or twice exclaimed against certain of Mr Cowen's sentiments; but the Home Rulers, powerful of lungs, and not to be deterred from the expression of their admiration, gave vent to long and sustained volumes of applause. Mr Cowen did not approve of all-night sittings, which, in his opinion, "appealed rather to physical force than to reason, and were more fitted for school-boys in a playground than for sober and sensible legislators." With telling and sustained eloquence, he defended the privileges of private members against the encroachments of party leaders; and, though Mr Cowen was more than once called to order, he did not forbear from stigmatising Mr Gladstone's Government as "a feeble and vacillating executive." There was, he said, "a line in an old book which some gentlemen in that House had a great regard for. That line said, 'Do unto others as you would be done by.'" And he appealed to Ministers to allow Home Rule Members all the privileges of debate. The Irish measures about to be introduced were, he urged, "hateful and humiliating," but let the Government beware how they muzzled opinion, lest a gloomy and enforced silence led to worse results.

At a somewhat earlier period of the debate Sir Stafford Northcote, while tendering a general support to Ministers, had declared that members on the Conservative side were not altogether satisfied with the course pursued in regard to the motion for giving precedence to the measures of Mr Forster, and he trusted that the debate on the Coercion Bill would be disposed of by the following day. The Irish Secretary, in reply, angrily declined any kind of compromise. He was glad to have the support of the Opposition, he said ; and, adopting a playful manner, he declared that Ministers did not suppose such support would have been given them unless honourable gentlemen on the other side felt that it was necessary to uphold the Government in the interests of the country. "We go to the division," he observed, "without compromise or arrangement of any kind." The motion for an adjournment, moved by Mr Gladstone, being finally agreed to, the Irish expressed themselves well contented with the debate and its result. Thus ended the famous twenty-two hours' sitting of the session of 1881.

THE FORTY-ONE AND A HALF HOURS' SITTING—

THE SPEAKER'S *Coup d'Etat*.

A temporary lull supervened. But there was trouble in the air. Members went in constant fear of all-night sittings, and one honourable gentleman suggested that in case the assembly should, from time to time, not break up until after daybreak, a flag should be hoisted on top of the clock-tower to tell London that the weary Legislature were still at work.

Down to midnight of January 31st, there was comparative quiet. Indeed, little was said or done to relieve the monotony of a worn-out Irish debate. True, Mr

O'Sullivan referred to "the six-and-eightpenny emotion" of an hon. and learned member on the other side; and Mr Newdegate recalled the time when he and Mr Bright, "like a couple of penitents in white sheets and with tapers in their hands," had walked into the same lobby together. Mr A. M. Sullivan was listened to with exemplary patience during the delivery of one of the most passionate of his rhetorical flights. Sir Joseph M'Kenna was received with calls for a division, and Mr Dawson did not easily obtain a hearing.

At a quarter past twelve, the question of an all-night sitting grew every moment a matter of more serious consideration. Mr Gladstone, who had been absent for a short time, had returned to the Treasury Bench, where he sat between Mr Forster and Mr Bright. The Irish presented a compact and united front, many of them ostentatiously armed with ample notes—equal to either fortune, an adjournment or a continuous sitting. While Mr Dawson was wearing away the time, Mr Gladstone was engaged in writing letters. Mr Forster came in and had a consultation with his chief, and presently went out again. Meanwhile Mr Parnell, supported by Mr T. P. O'Connor and Mr Healy, held a council of war.

At one o'clock Mr Gabbett moved the adjournment of the debate, a motion which was resisted by the Premier with a brief, prompt negative. Major Nolan pleaded for a little more time in which to discuss the Bill, with the general lines of which the House was now acquainted. Mr Dillon asked for another night, and wanted to know why pressure had been put on English members to prevent them from speaking on behalf of Ireland. Mr Parnell did not think the ultimatum of the Government would be calculated to save time. He also asked for another night, particularly as he

had not yet spoken during the debate. Mr Parnell would be sorry to place any impediment in the way of public business. Indeed, he had never done so. If they were kept up all that night, and all the next, and all the following night, they would not be better off than if a compromise were made at that stage. The more the House laughed, the more quiet, cool and collected was the manner of the Member for Cork. If the Government would not give way, he and his friends would fight the battle out as best they might, and they would be supported by the majority of the Irish people. He believed that the tide was near its turning, and that this would be the last insult offered to Ireland. Mr Parnell was persistently interrupted, but throughout preserved his truly wonderful imperturbability. Quoting a passage as from a speech of Mr Gladstone, the Premier several times called across the House, "Give me the reference. Are those my words?" "I did not quote them as the words of the right honourable gentleman," replied Mr Parnell, whereupon groans and hisses drowned his voice. Now and again Mr Parnell was called to order, but for a time, at least, managed to triumph over his enemies. The hon. member read copious extracts from a back number of the *Edinburgh Review*, until Mr Speaker said that the House would prefer a few original observations.

At length Sir R. Cross called the attention of the Chair to the irrelevancy of Mr Parnell's observations. This drew an interposition from Mr O'Donnell, and an assurance from Mr Parnell to Mr Speaker that he should be forced during these debates to try the patience of the House, a course which he ventured to observe, would not be out of order. "Question! Question!" rose on every hand. But the more industriously Mr Parnell was interrupted the more assiduously he kept to his

course. Mr Warton and Mr Alderman Fowler ineffectually tried their hands at silencing the Member for Cork. Once more Sir R. Cross appealed to the Chair, but such a tumultuous shout arose from the Parnellites that nothing was gained by the call to order. Mr Parnell sat down only a few minutes before two o'clock, after which Dr Commins endeavoured—not ineffectually—to shout down the rest of the House, those in his immediate neighbourhood excepted. So the debate went on, “From morn to dewy eve,” through the watches, not silent, of the night, to daybreak and noon, and again to sunset, and on and on for hours, apparently illimitable.

There are so many letters in the alphabet, so many numerals in arithmetic, so many notes in music, so many harmonies and discords in sound. All those factors are measurable, but there are combinations of them immense, unbounded, “like the sands of the sea for multitude.” Admitting the vocal genius of the Celtic race, it might, nevertheless, have been thought impossible that a handful of Irish Members could put so many complexions upon the same sentiment, could repeat a single idea under such a variety of forms.

What Mr Parnell had stated at half-past one on Tuesday morning Mr O'Connor Power repeated at half-past four the following afternoon—that if the Home Rule party could not defeat the Government, they could, by prolonged discussion, so inform the mind of Parliament and the public as to the inaccuracy of the report on which the Bill was based as to mitigate the severity of the contemplated measure.

Fifteen hours had added nothing to the value of the debate. There was indeed, and could be, nothing more to say that was worth listening to. Members might take

part in, and spectators look on, at a trial of patience and wakefulness. The rest was a waste of words.

Although the chamber in which the Commons sit is an apartment of magnificent proportions, ventilated at great cost, yet after a more than ordinarily prolonged sitting it becomes almost unbearable on account of the unpleasant dryness of the atmosphere, while the air of the corridors and retiring-rooms grows still more close and unpleasant. Very few members stayed all night. Ministers and the official Opposition worked upon a system of reliefs similar to the watches on board ship at sea. The most exhausting part of the labour had on this occasion to be borne by the small numerical minority challenged by Mr Gladstone to a trial of strength. A study of the returns of the divisions taken at half-past seven in the morning and at a quarter-past three in the following afternoon shows that the Irish were most active when their enemies were in bed. The first of the two divisions indicated gives twenty-seven Home Rulers to 148 supporters of the Government, whereas seven hours later the Irish had dwindled to a total of twenty-one as against 225 for the other side. The motion put to the vote was ostensibly for the adjournment of the House. The actual question to be decided was, however, the supremacy in dogged obstinacy of hon. members below the gangway on the left, over the rest of the assembly.

Between two and three o'clock in the morning Mr Mitchell-Henry frankly informed his countrymen on the opposite side that such work was "all very well for coal-heavers, who relied on physical strength." For himself, he "was no longer young, and should therefore respectfully, but sorrowfully, take his leave." Mr Labouchere contended that, according to the Standing Orders, when the Speaker once left the chair and

his place had been taken by a deputy, such deputy must continue to preside over the debate until its conclusion. It followed, therefore, that in the course of fatigue the House must adjourn some time or other.

At ten minutes to five in the morning, the Speaker, who had sat from a quarter before four of the previous afternoon, left the chair, and his place was taken by Dr Playfair. But when Mr Speaker returned, eight and a-half hours later, Mr Parnell endeavoured to enforce the reading of the Standing Order of the House as above. Mr Brand, however, overruled the objection, since, right or wrong in principle, the moment chosen was inopportune.

It must be confessed that in the very heat and turmoil of debate men of all parties are still wont to bow to the ruling of the Chair. Only once during the night was an attempt made to question the authority of Dr Playfair; but the good sense of the majority triumphed, and the rebellious member was put to silence.

An all-night sitting of the House of Commons is not conducted with a view of affording amusement to the strangers in the gallery; at the same time, it would have been possible to render the proceedings on this occasion less dull. Sir Patrick O'Brien was entertaining, it is true, particularly when he exclaimed: "There are those who make agitation the business of their lives; but they cannot point to a day when I took a penny of the poor's money."

Mr Warton and Sir Henry Tyler appear to have agreed that they would watch over the debate by turns, and that while one rested, the other should sacrifice to sleeplessness. This induced Mr Gill to say that Sir Henry kept his eye on the lips of Home Rulers as closely and well as the "tyler" at the door of a masonic lodge.

The pun, though not particularly brilliant, was among the liveliest passages of the dreary debate, until Mr Healy likened Judge Fitzgerald to "an old crocodile on the banks of the Nile." The most unconscious, if not the best, of the few jocularities at the disposal of the House, was that in which an Irish member urged a plea for further delay on the ground that the London newspapers would not report the speeches made in the middle of the night, "at full length."

Twenty-two hours after the commencement of the debate Mr Parnell addressed the Speaker in the mildest of tones. Indeed the sweetness of his manner was the more remarkable when contrasted with the strength of his language. The plea for urgency he contended had been broken into a thousand pieces, and the Prime Minister only kept on to save his reputation for consistency. Mr Parnell expressed his willingness to answer with his own head, if necessary, in support of his assertion that the peace of Ireland was not in danger; and he called upon the Chief Secretary to prove that there was urgency for "this cruel, wicked, wretched and degrading measure."

Mr Gladstone was absent during a great part of this night. The right hon. gentleman left the House about two in the morning, and did not return until a quarter past eleven next day.

Twenty-nine hours having elapsed, the appearance of the chamber was not gratifying. An odd volume of Hansard, occupied the official Conservative seats, which were otherwise bare. Mr Bright, Mr Cotes, and Mr Courtney waited wearily upon the Treasury Bench, supported in the rear by Mr Charles Russell and two other hon. members. Some half-dozen Radicals were below the gangway on the right, and twice as

many Home Rulers kept guard behind Mr Finigan, who was complaining of Irish landlords for "existing on the sweat of other peoples' brows." The First Lord of the Treasury had been dozing in his place, when he was awoke by an observation of Mr Finigan to the effect that he sympathised with the somnolence of the Prime Minister. He, too, was tired, but with the assistance of his hon. friends, he was prepared to go on until the following Monday. Mr Forster, who had entered and disposed himself to rest at the corner of the Treasury Bench, did not move a muscle at this dreadful threat, but tried to snatch "forty winks."

Mr Gill, following Mr Finigan, seconded his motion for the adjournment of the House, but was stopped for a moment by Sir Edward Watkin, who endeavoured to rule him out of order, on the ground that he had already spoken on a precisely similar point at an earlier period of the sitting. Thereupon, Mr Healy, prompt to make reprisals, immediately called a count, and brought hon. members from their repose outside. The lesson was not lost, and Mr Gill was suffered to proceed in his endeavour to convert Sir William Harcourt and Mr Chamberlain—Ministers on duty—to his belief that it "was not an outrage to cut off three inches of a heifer's tail, because the millions of lambs born into this country each year had every one its tail cut off, and this without comment on the part of the Government, and without forming the subject of a Blue Book."

Mr O'Shaughnessy next addressed the House with the air of a man who had just returned from an agreeable country tour, strengthened and sustained for renewed labours. The general depression, however, proved too much even for Mr O'Shaughnessy's oratorical freshness, and he soon succumbed, partly, it may have been, to the

pitiful glances of his jaded auditors. Dr Commins was, however, not so sensitive. The House might flout and groan, but the hon. member sped steadily through his speech. "Hon. gentlemen seem to be in a hurry," said Mr O'Shaughnessy, smiling; "there is no hurry." "Go on," shouted his baffled would-be tormentors; and Mr O'Shaughnessy went on as requested until called to order by the Speaker. "I will bow to the Chair, Sir, but I will not be put down by clamour," said he. And on went the hon. member amid a roar of disapproval. Scarcely one word in twenty could be heard. "Take it calmly," exclaimed Mr O'Shaughnessy, unmoved. He himself took it calmly, without doubt, and, at length, calmly sat down.

Then Mr Healy would have spoken, but the House would not hear him. Members made noises which can only be likened to those of the Zoo just before feeding time; until Mr Healy's eloquence seemed like a vocal representation of the Morse telegraphic alphabet, the alternate dot representing his own utterances, and the alternate dash the groans of the all-but-universal enemy. Mr Arthur O'Connor was not more successful in obtaining audience, and his chances were not improved by a declaration on his part that several of the Ministers sided with the Irish members, and desired to give priority to the Land Bill over coercive measures. The groans which greeted Mr Healy and Mr O'Connor turned to shouts of derision when Mr T. D. Sullivan intruded upon the attention of the House.

The debate was, indeed, assuming an air of uncontrollable riot, when Sir R. Cross, jumping up, called the attention of the Speaker to the Standing Order against wilful and persistent obstruction. The speeches of Irish members, he urged, must not be taken one by one, but

altogether, as a combination to obstruct. A perfect storm of congratulations arose at the interposition. The Speaker answered that if he found such a combination to exist, he might put the Standing Order into force, and he was bound to say that it seemed to him such a combination did exist. Mr Parnell sprang to his feet as if about to reply, but he in turn was shouted down, and Mr Sullivan was allowed to go on. The House was now full again. Hon. members had rested and refreshed themselves, and the chance of the Irish seemed on the wane. At this juncture Sir Erskine May, the clerk at the table, had to inform the House of the unavoidable absence of Mr Speaker.

Dr Playfair having once more taken the chair vacated by the Speaker, Mr Dillon took the floor, but he had apparently not nearly finished when Sir Henry Woolf moved that, having infringed the rules of the House, he be put to silence. The motion was not seconded, and Mr Dillon shortly sat down. At midnight Sir Stafford Northcote, while the House was yet full, took the opportunity of drawing the attention of the Deputy-Speaker to the deplorable state of affairs. The same Members had risen again and again to make the same speeches. There was an evident combination to obstruct, and he wished to know how long that kind of thing would be permitted to go on unchecked. It was the duty of the Government to support the Chair. Mr Childers took up the challenge, and deprecated the "Parliamentary offence" of obstruction. If Dr Playfair should think fit—and he hoped he would think fit—to put a stop to this obstruction, he would have the cordial support of Her Majesty's Government.

Notwithstanding that Mr Childers was cheered heartily from both sides, Mr Justin M'Carthy soon obtained a

hearing to argue against this "gigantic innovation, by which it was sought to stop a debate at any moment at the will of the majority." Mr M'Carthy having been called to order by the Chair, the House would no longer hear him, and Mr O'Donnell instantly faced the tumult. He tried hard, but made little way; and Mr Dodson, on behalf of the Government, declared that the stock of arguments at the command of Mr Parnell's followers having been exhausted, they ought not to continue the barren discussion. Mr Gorst next declared that weary Legislators and the country also looked to "the person who presided over this House" to put an end to "the disgraceful and unhappy scene." The time had arrived when the Speaker should name names, and bring the debate to a close. At the very mention of a prospect so delightful the House roared again. Mr Parnell objected, but Dr Playfair held that the time had come to put a stop to further waste of words. Still calm, still imperturbable as when the engagement began, thirty-three hours earlier, Mr Parnell once more attempted to argue the question. Mr W. H. Smith, however, called upon Dr Playfair to name the Member for Cork, but that request having been firmly but courteously refused, probably not fewer than seventy members, principally on the Conservative side, rose and left the House *en masse*. Shouting, roaring, and groaning ensued, and Mr Milbank rising, overcome with passion, called for the protection of the Chair from the application to himself of a most opprobrious epithet.

After many further interruptions and a veritable Babel of noise, Mr Bright rose, and instantly the tumult subsided. He said that the Irish members had enjoyed seventeen hours more of time than had been

asked for by them the day before, and now, at a quarter-past one o'clock, surely a division might be taken. The House would, later on, know how to defend itself from the grossest case of insult and obstruction which had ever been offered it. Mr Bright spoke with evident concern. No sooner had he resumed his seat than Mr O'Connor Power deliberately reopened the discussion. Mr Biggar had one or two narrow escapes of being "named" from the Chair. He did, however, dexterously keep clear of censure. Another division being called resulted in 22 votes for the adjournment and 197 against; majority, 175. And still the debate proceeded.

The extreme unwillingness of the Deputy-Speaker, Dr Playfair, to accept the suggestions made from both sides of the House to close the debate, by the process of naming Home Rule members one by one as they rose to address the Chair, occasioned very general disappointment. Either the effective thunderbolt which fell among the Obstructionists later on had not then been forged, or its existence was kept a profound secret from all but the heads of the Administration. Ministers had apparently arranged for regular night shifts of their supporters, and Mr Parnell's followers had likewise organised themselves into relief parties, if necessary, to carry on the irregular warfare to the end of the week at least.

The subordinate officials of the House, jaded with the long vigil, looked forward with anxiety and dread to the probable result. Mr Speaker, it is true, might from time to time be relieved by his deputy, and the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Clerks at the table enjoy some chance of occasional spells of sleep; but many other persons not so fortunately placed were compelled to remain at their posts through all those weary hours.

Though the peers had deserted their coign of vantage, and Members preferred the precincts of the House to the House itself, the strangers' galleries were never other than full from first to last, and all through the night the spectators, both gentlemen and ladies, looked down with eager curiosity upon the extraordinary historical incidents being enacted below. To describe at length what took place from three until nine in the morning would be but to repeat an already told tale. The proceedings were practically an attempt on the part of a few Members, representatives of Irish constituencies, to talk against time. There were disturbances and reconciliations, interruptions and explanations. Sir E. J. Reed and Sir Patrick O'Brien took upon themselves to assist the Deputy-Speaker in the difficult if not impossible task of preserving order. Now and again a Minister lounged into the House and took up a position on the Treasury Bench. Sometimes Lord Hartington represented the Government, sometimes the Solicitor-General for Ireland relieved the noble marquis, to be, in turn, supported by the late Lord Frederick Cavendish and other Members of the Administration. Novelty there was none, very little argument, and still less eloquence.

Dr Commins spoke for two hours. Mr Barry followed and occupied the time for an hour. Next came Mr Sexton, who kept the debate going for about three times as long, and Mr Leamy and others carried on the campaign until the rising of Mr Biggar, who was still speaking when Mr Gladstone reappeared shortly before nine in the morning. The right hon. gentleman was heartily cheered as he took his seat, and soon after Mr Speaker entered and once more occupied the chair.

At this time Mr Parnell was absent, and altogether the Home Rulers did not number a score. The

Obstructing phalanx had no premonition of what was to follow. They were unprepared for a *coup d'état*. No sooner, however, had Mr Speaker resumed his authority than, rising in his place, he demanded silence from Mr Biggar, and proceeded to close the debate.

Astonishment displayed itself on the features of the Parnellites thus taken by surprise. Caught in the toils at last, they were forced to surrender. It was, said Mr Speaker, necessary to vindicate the authority of the Chair, and he had determined not to permit any further discussion on the motion before them. The debate had lasted forty-one hours, and must now come to a conclusion. At once the sound of the division bells called hon. members outside to the active service of their duty, and the vote being duly taken, the Clerk at the table proclaimed that 164 members had voted in favour of leave to bring in the Irish Coercion Bill, against 19 dissentients. Thereupon Mr Justin M'Carthy rose, but was properly and peremptorily called to order. Mr Speaker remained standing upon the little platform in front of the chair; and the Obstructionists finding themselves effectually baffled, stood up in their places as one man. Raising their hands aloft, they shrieked "Liberty, liberty!" and were answered from other parts of the House with no less pronounced shouts of "Privilege, privilege!" Then the Parnellites filed out upon the floor, and, bowing one by one to Mr Speaker, slowly quitted the Chamber.

The moment having at last arrived, Mr Forster advancing to the table, the Bill was formally introduced and read for the first time. The cheering which followed upon this proceeding having subsided, Mr Gladstone, in moving the adjournment of the House, gave notice that on the following day he would propose resolutions for the

better conduct of business on future occasions. The House adjourned at half-past nine o'clock, after a continuous sitting of forty-one and a half hours!

FORCE A REMEDY.

On the resumption of business at twenty minutes past twelve o'clock that same day the Chamber was crowded in every part. Mr Forster, Mr Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt, Mr Childers, Lord Hartington, Mr Bright, and Mr Chamberlain occupied the Treasury Bench in the order indicated; and Lords Spencer and Derby and a crowd of peers had taken up a position in the gallery. Directly Mr Redmond, the newly-returned member for New Ross, was observed in the doorway, escorted by Messrs Parnell and Healy, the baffled obstructives set up a shout of welcome. Mr Bradlaugh having given notice that he would on a future day move to prevent the Irish Coercion Bill from having a retrospective effect, and Lord Randolph Churchill having put a question to Mr Gladstone concerning the proposed new rules of debate, Mr Labouchere asked by what authority the Speaker had closed the preceding discussion "I acted," said Mr Speaker, with studied deliberation, "on my own authority, and with a sense of duty to the House." Whereupon shouts of assent and congratulation rent the air. Again and again the cheers rose and fell, were resumed, and slowly, very slowly, subsided. It was impossible to misunderstand the meaning of the demonstration. Without a motion or discussion of any kind the House of Commons there and then confirmed the action of its responsible chief. The revolution in favour of orderly debate had achieved a conquest which could not be misrepresented or gainsaid.

Mr Parnell, almost without comment proposed to

move that the morning's action of the Speaker amounted to a breach of privilege. The Speaker, thus appealed to, declared emphatically that the question could not be raised on privilege, and after some fencing as to the meaning of terms, in which The O'Donoghue took part, Mr A. M. Sullivan flung himself into the breach and moved that "this House do disagree with Mr Speaker." A long and animated discussion between the Speaker and Mr Sullivan followed as to the existence of certain parliamentary precedents bearing on the case ; and Mr Sullivan, having been cautioned on his liability to the consequences of the course he was pursuing, proceeded to move the adjournment of the House. Between that time and the termination of the proceedings at six o'clock, nothing of importance was done beyond the delivery of a series of speeches for and against the motion for adjournment. The division was taken at a few minutes before closing time, and resulted in 44 for the adjournment and 278 against the resolution. The latter hours of the afternoon's sitting were extremely dull, and consisted of the familiar tactics of the Irish faction. The sitting was simply talked out. Though constantly called to order by the Speaker, and reminded of the gravity of the situation in which he had placed himself, Mr Sullivan, especially at first, conducted his case with dignity of demeanour, eloquence, and a manifest desire to impress the assembly. As a rhetorical display the effort was, on the whole, distinguished for remarkable self-command. Finally extending his arm in the direction of Mr Gladstone, and at the same time looking towards the Speaker, the orator exclaimed—his frame trembling with emotion—"The Rules of the House are in your hands, not in his!" All the same, force had proved a remedy!

CHAPTER IX.

SUSPENSION OF THE THIRTY-FIVE.

WHEN Mr A. M. Sullivan declared, with passionate energy, that the rules of the House of Commons were in the hands of the Speaker, and not in those of the Prime Minister, he must for the moment have forgotten a Standing Order of the preceding session, whereby the leader for the time being might call on the presiding officer to "name" a member guilty of disregarding the authority of the Chair; whereupon, should a majority of those present signify their approval, the offender might be suspended from taking any part in the further proceedings of that day's sitting.

Meanwhile the Government, determined to strike a crushing blow at the Obstructives, arrested Mr Michael Davitt for infringing the terms of his ticket of leave, an act which infuriated them to the point of madness, and directly induced the last and worst "scene" of that troubled and tumultuous time.

Directly the Parnellites learned the fact of the arrest, they held a conclave and settled upon a plan of action which was afterwards carried out to the letter. It was agreed, in case a division should be called for on the subject of Davitt's imprisonment, that they would, one and all, keep their seats, as a demonstration against the "tyranny" of Ministers. The Government, however, not to be deterred from their set purpose, promptly filled the staircases and avenues leading to

the chamber with a picked body of police, ready for any emergency that might arise.

There is an old proverb which says : " Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with ; " and we shall presently see that the leader of the House seized upon the very slight excuse of Mr Dillon rising to a point of order—a perfectly regular proceeding—to precipitate events. The House, with the terrors of the forty-one and a half hours' sitting fresh in its memory, would not accord an ordinary courtesy to one of the obstructive faction, and as that honourable member positively declined to yield to their possibly justifiable clamour, or even to the express mandate of the Chair—embodying the will of an immense majority of his fellow-legislators—the inevitable result of such obstinacy ensued as a matter of course.

Mr A. M. Sullivan's protest against the *coup d'état* was made at the morning sitting of Wednesday, February 2, and the next afternoon an immense crowd of members, peers and strangers assembled, all anxious to hear Mr Gladstone expound his new rules, and still more eager for the expected Parnellite demonstration. Throughout the comparatively formal business which preceded the great event, all present were on the tip-toe of expectation.

At length Mr Parnell rose, unperturbed, and gazing fixedly at Sir William Harcourt, said coldly : " I desire to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Mr Davitt was arrested at one o'clock to-day ? " And while he was in the very act of sitting down, his henchmen raised a wild cry of mingled anger and exultation.

The first shot was fired—the battle had begun !

When the tumult had somewhat subsided, Sir

William Harcourt, in that bland but peculiarly irritating manner—all his own—admitted that, after consultation with his colleagues, including the Irish law officers, he had come to the decision that Davitt's conduct was incompatible with the conditions on which a convict, enjoying a ticket of leave from the Crown, was allowed to be at large. Sir William dwelt on the word "convict" with an emphasis which may or may not have been intended to rouse the Irish. Nevertheless they interrupted him with loud hissing and yells of "Shame!" But the more strenuously they objected, the more heartily the House cheered the Government.

Apparently indifferent to the clamour, Mr Parnell mildly inquired, "What conditions Davitt had violated?" But Sir William, not to be drawn out, required him to give formal notice of his question. "Answer! answer!" roared the Parnellites; and the House replied with deprecatory shouts of "No! no!" There stood Mr Parnell trying to make himself heard above the deafening noise, until Mr Speaker was seen, upright, hat in hand, motioning for silence. Only those close to the Chair could hear Mr Brand inviting Mr Gladstone to go on with his resolution.

Rising and approaching the table, the Prime Minister became aware of another upright figure, and must have seen the wild, white face, the coal-black beard, and gleaming eyes of Mr Dillon, who at that identical moment was speaking to a point of order. Thereupon the Premier considerably resumed his seat, while Mr Dillon continued to gesticulate wildly, and several honourable members did their best, in the vain hope to roar him down.

Some bench-neighbour must have told Mr Dillon,

who had lost all command of himself, that Mr Brand had risen to his feet, for he left off haranguing the assembly, and folding his arms across his breast, turned a passion-livid face towards the Speaker, who curtly informed him that the Prime Minister was in "possession of the House." In the midst of so much confusion, Mr Dillon may not have understood what was said from the Chair, but he could not fail to hear the cries for "Gladstone!" and the shouts of "Order!" which ensued. Nevertheless he would not yield, but stood, a look of thunder upon his gloomy brow—his nostrils dilated, quivering with passion. At the instance of the Premier, the Speaker named him. Yet he did not move. Friends cheered, opponents jeered, yet he did not move! The Parnellites consulted together, joined by Mr Labouchere and Mr Joseph Cowen. Some members cried "Shame!" others "Sit down!" Mr Dillon was heard screaming "Privilege!" and his companions roaring "Point of order!" The noise was as if the four winds had been let loose in that lofty oaken chamber with the panelled glass roof. A hurtling tempest of sound rang in the rafters, and the brittle ceiling vibrated with the shock. Yet Mr Dillon did not move! He stood still, now silent, his chest heaving, his dark eyes flashing fire, his lips parted, his teeth glistening in the gas-light—a dreadful picture of impotent rage.

While this tremendous uproar was at its height several of the Parnellites appeared to be making speeches, either to the House or to one another. And above the din the accustomed ear caught the strident voice of Mr A. M. Sullivan informing something or somebody that his "honourable friend had risen to a point of order," that the said something or somebody "knew as much,"

and that he, Mr A. M. Sullivan, protested against the division.

Even then the Obstructives as a body would have remained steadfast in their places while the vote was taken, had not more prudent counsels for the time being prevailed. 395 were for the motion, 33 against it.

Mr Dillon came back into the House with his friends, and though twice directed by the Speaker to withdraw, respectfully refused. The Sergeant-at-Arms, acting upon the order of the Chair, attempted, but failed to remove him, single-handed. All this time there was a dreadful din, Mr A. M. Sullivan alone standing up as if about to address the House. In a moment, the Sergeant-at-Arms—a short, portly man, well advanced in years, spick and span in court dress—inclined his venerable bald head and jovial grey-bearded countenance a little over his right shoulder in the direction of the door. Mr Dillon, however, was inexorable. There he was and there he hoped to stay—the vote of suspension to the contrary.

That glance towards the door, out of the right eye, over the right shoulder of the Sergeant-at-Arms, had the desired effect, and four or five more or less waiter-like-looking persons, in the more or less correct semblance of evening dress, and wearing gilt chains round their necks and gilded figures of Mercury attached thereto, came trooping in, pale and flurried, and joined their chief.

“Oh!” cried Mr Dillon, “If you use force I’ll go.” And go he did, without making the usual obeisance to the Chair—contrary to the rigid etiquette of the House, when a member leaves, if only for a minute, respectfully to salute Mr Speaker. As the waiter-looking “messengers” closed round his retreating form, Mr Dillon’s

friends shouted "Shame!" and the rest of the members drowned the short, sharp cry with a counter-demonstration of applause.

No sooner had the exclamations and the cheering died away than Mr A. M. Sullivan began a long and lively tirade against Mr Speaker, impeaching that high official as a violator of precedent, of liberty, and of legality, and what was more, "a usurper of authority." He declared that "the reign of law had passed away and the reign of force taken its place," and alluding to the House generally, called out: "We have become a bad parody of the third Empire."

Instead of arguing with the perfervid orator, Mr Speaker blandly explained to him that what had been done was perfectly in order. It came to this, that Mr Dillon had stood up when told to sit down, and consequently had been turned out. There was nothing more to say.

Four right honourable and honourable gentlemen were at this juncture rising and resuming their seats, sometimes all together, sometimes promiscuously—to a desultory fire of cheers and "Order!"—that is to say, the Speaker, the Premier, Mr A. M. Sullivan, and The O'Donoghue. The Speaker desired to call on Mr Gladstone, Mr Gladstone desired to speak, so did Mr A. M. Sullivan, while The O'Donoghue cut in with a motion for the adjournment of the House.

Choosing an odd moment when all four of them happened to be seated at the same moment, Mr Parnell jumped up, and coolly moved that Mr Gladstone "be no longer heard." More cheers, more cries of "Order!" resounded through the House. Mr Speaker ruled that the Premier was "in possession." Mr Parnell insisted on his right to make the motion. The

O'Donoghue backed him up. The Speaker accused Mr Parnell of "wilful obstruction," and named him. Mr Gladstone moved his suspension during the sitting: The bells were rung for the division, but the thirty-four Parnellites present would not vote—a fact which Lord Richard Grosvenor, one of the Government tellers, duly reported to the Chair. Said Mr A. M. Sullivan—"We contest the legality of the proceedings." Mr Speaker, however, told them that, inasmuch as the division having been taken and they having contumaciously refused to vote, their votes could not be counted. The door of the "Aye" division lobby was then opened, and 405 members who had voted for Mr Parnell's suspension were let in.

The "Noes" numbered seven—Messrs Labouchere, Joseph Cowen, Callan, Martin, M'Kenna, O'Shea, and Synan.

The House having at length settled down, Mr Speaker reported what had happened; and while the Ministerialists were still vociferously cheering the statement, Mr Gladstone and Mr Finigan rose at one and the same moment to two totally distinct points of order—seeing which, Mr Speaker rose also, and the other two subsided. Mr Speaker's object in rising was to call on Mr Parnell to withdraw, which instruction Mr Parnell respectfully declined to carry out. More uproar. More cries of "Breach of Privilege." More shouts of "Illegal!" Then the Sergeant was summoned. But Mr Parnell, not appearing to notice him, said to the Speaker, quite calmly, as if the matter were one of everyday occurrence: "Sir, I respectfully refuse to withdraw unless I am compelled by superior force." The Sergeant heard, and straightway beckoned his merry men. A sight of those worthy persons was

enough; and Mr Parnell, unconcernedly rising from his seat, and waving them gently aside, walked out upon the matting, paused opposite the mace, bowed most courteously to Mr Speaker, turned round and strode slowly and majestically out of the door, followed by the Sergeant-at-Arms and his attendant sprites. But "the uncrowned king of Ireland" did not go out in silence. His party, as he came down the floor, rose as one man, and with waving of hats and acclaiming, reverberating voices showed him that to their minds, at least, his suspension seemed no shame but a triumph!

It was now the turn of Mr Finigan, who would persist in interrupting Mr Gladstone's prefatory remarks on the subject of the New Rules with a neat collection of points of order, ending with the motion that "the Prime Minister be no longer heard." Therefore Mr Finigan was turned out by 405 to 2—28 of the yet unsuspended Parnellites again refusing to vote—Mr Parnell smiling approval upon them from the distinguished strangers' gallery, whither he had betaken himself almost immediately after making his triumphal exit.

Mr Speaker having previously cautioned the Obstructives, that by again refusing to vote they were "disregarding the authority of the Chair;" by his direction Mr Archibald Milman, the second Clerk-Assistant, proceeded with the tellers, Lord R. Grosvenor, Lord Kensington, Mr R. Power, and Major Nolan, to the Parnellite Benches, and recorded the names of those who had declined to leave the House and to take part in the division. Mr Milman then handed the list to the Speaker who, having consulted Sir Erskine May, Clerk of the House, ordered the division to proceed.

Mr Finigan returned with the voters, but the Sergeant and the gilded messengers were too much for him, and he was led away amid laughter.

Then those twenty-eight rebellious gentlemen were disposed of, not one by one, but in a body. The O'Gorman Mahon, a broad-shouldered, upright, handsome old man, with a splendid crop of snow-white hair, said that, having sat in Parliament, on and off, for fifty years, he "on the part of his constituents and in the cause of emancipation" declined to stir unless moved by force. And at length when he too yielded to those awful Mercuries, Mr A. M. Sullivan comforted the old patriot with the assurance that being turned out was to "his honour and to the disgrace of the House."

Intervention and protest proved, however, alike unavailing. The House acting through the Speaker suspended in one batch, Mr Barry, Mr Biggar, Mr Bierne, Mr Wm. Corbet, Mr Daly, Mr Dawson, Mr Gill, Mr Gray, Mr Healy, Mr Lalor, Mr Leamy, Mr Leahy, Mr Justin M'Carthy, Mr M'Coan, Mr Marum, Mr Metge, Mr Nelson, Mr A. O'Connor, Mr T. P. O'Connor, the O'Donoghue, Mr O'Sullivan, Mr O'Connor Power, Mr Redmond, Mr Sexton, Mr Smithwick, Mr A. M. Sullivan, and Mr Timothy Sullivan.

Speeches were made by Messrs Arthur Balfour, Gorst, and Cowen, questioning the regularity of the proceedings; but the words fell upon unwilling ears. The assembly was not in the mood to temper justice with mercy. All the members named separately declined to withdraw unless compelled by superior numbers. But in every case a touch of the Sergeant's hand on the legislator's coat-sleeve was deemed force sufficient. Everyone of them, however, made each his little rhetorical flourish anent "Liberty!" and "Tyranny!"

Five other Parnellites were subsequently suspended, namely,—Mr Molloy, who had already beat a judicious retreat—Messrs O'Kelly, O'Donnell, Richard Power, and O'Shaughnessy.

Of all the routed party Mr Callan alone escaped.

Within five minutes of the termination of the extraordinary scene the House sat calmly and patiently listening to the Premier's lucid exposition of the New Rules.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

THE New Rules dealt a death-blow at "Scenes in the Commons." Open, wilful, and protracted obstruction is no longer possible. Unjustifiable all-night sittings are numbered among the things of the past. It is now in the power of the Speaker to call the attention of the House to continued irrelevance or tedious repetition on the part of a member, and to direct the member to discontinue his speech. Also, in case a motion be made for the adjournment of the debate, or of the House, the Speaker may decline to put the question thereupon, if, in his judgment, such motion is made for the purpose of obstruction; or, if he think fit to put the question, may do so without permitting discussion. In short, the Speaker possesses the authority, on sufficient reason being shown, to enforce the *clôture* and so silence the debate.

These extensive powers, conferred by the House on their president, notwithstanding, the Parliamentary machine does not work as smoothly as some desire. Various methods are resorted to with the apparent object of delaying legislation. Bills are blocked from both sides. That is to say, notice of opposition is given so that they cannot be taken after half-past twelve at night; and the blockers and their friends keep up the debate, on whatever subject may happen to be under discussion, until the half-hour has struck,

thus gaining their point. Both Liberals and Conservatives take advantage of the rule to harass their opponents.

Another fruitful source of delay, though not necessarily of mischief, arises out of the constitutional dogma that questions of grievance may always be raised on motions for supply. When Ministers are in urgent need of money to carry on the business of the country, their opponents seize upon the occasion to bring forward some matter having the colour of a grievance—such for example as the foreign policy of the Government—and the debate which almost invariably ensues, consumes, or, as some aver, wastes time.

Not much fault in this direction can be found with the out-and-out supporters of the Government, or with the great majority of the regular opposition. It is the desire of the former to expedite business, and the latter bear in mind that some day they may change places with their opponents. They are consequently made considerate by a sense of responsibility.

Proposed legislation is principally delayed from below the gangways on both sides. The Radical members are full of plans for woman-suffrage, universal temperance, the abolition of the House of Lords, peace-at-any-price, the impoverishment of landlords, and all kinds of more or less valuable, far-fetched, and utopian schemes; and they are one and all eager to air their ideas at considerable length. Of course the Parnellites obstruct whenever and wherever they can do so, with safety to themselves. Of late they have crowded the question-paper, night after night, with long-drawn-out trivial queries, with the apparent object of unduly protracting question-time, and so delaying regular business. Lord Randolph Churchill, supported

by his two acknowledged followers, is likewise responsible for some of the so-called waste of time.

Yet, after all, is the delay an unmixed evil? The Government complain that they are unable to carry out their programme as quickly as they could wish. What of that? There are almost as many electors opposed to the Government, and to their policy, as there are electors who support them. The enemy is not at the gate. The citizens are safe, every one in the enjoyment of his rights. What is the need then for violent pressure and undue haste? Hurried legislation leads to vague and obscure Acts of Parliament.

Although I have done my best, throughout these pages, to avoid taking a side, I desire to say that I am in favour of change, so that it be consistent with justice, and of every reform that will make or keep men equal before the law. But I cannot join in the chorus of complaint against the present House of Commons, or take part with those who delight to disparage its members. It is, as a whole, an assembly remarkable for talent, for energy, and for public virtue.

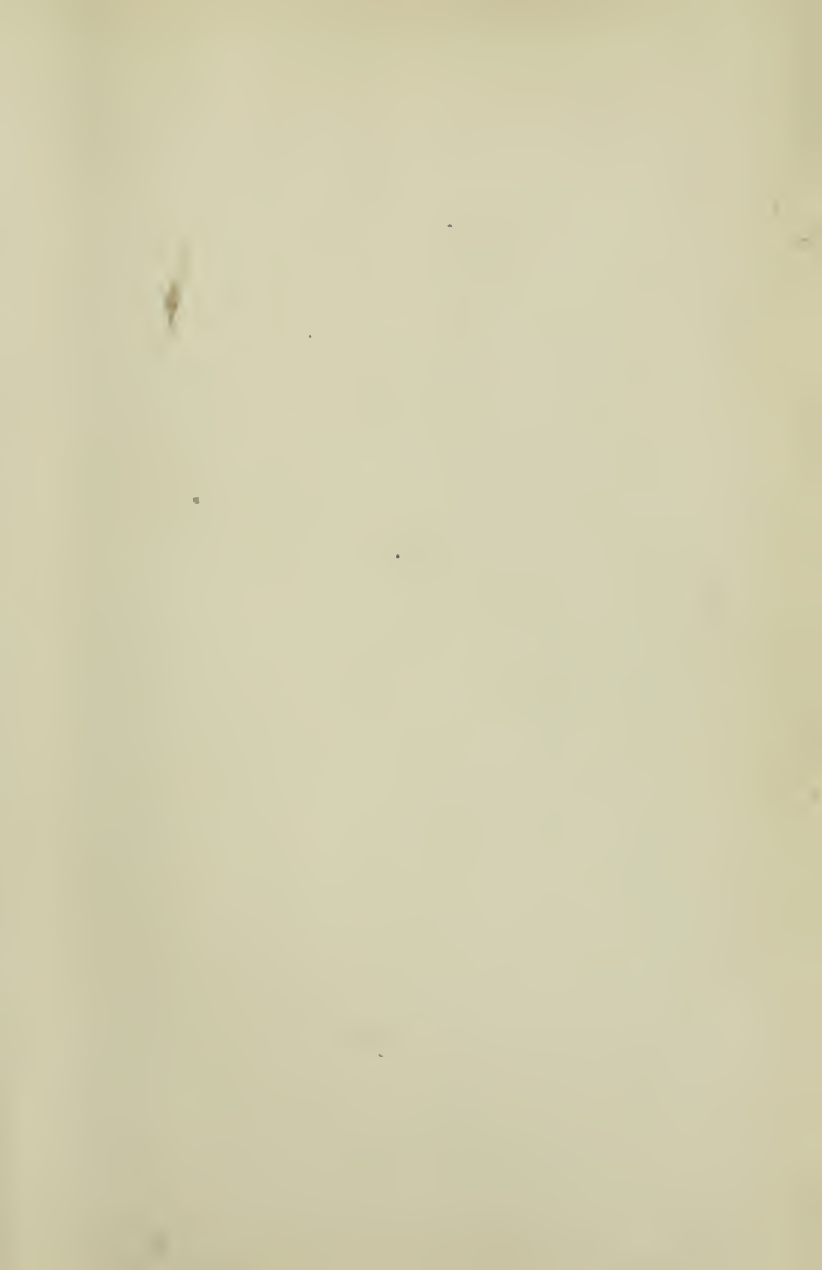
Such letters as that of Mr Herbert Spencer, declining to stand for Leicester—and the eminent sociologist is not singular in his views—may easily be productive of error in the public mind. A member of Parliament, though pledged to a side in politics, is something very much more than the delegate of a caucus, the creature of a party, or the slave of Ministers. So long as government by party—the best of all governmental plans yet devised for giving effect to the People's will—exists, a member of Parliament must attach himself to one Standard or another, must occasionally sacrifice his personal wishes and aims at the instance of his leaders.

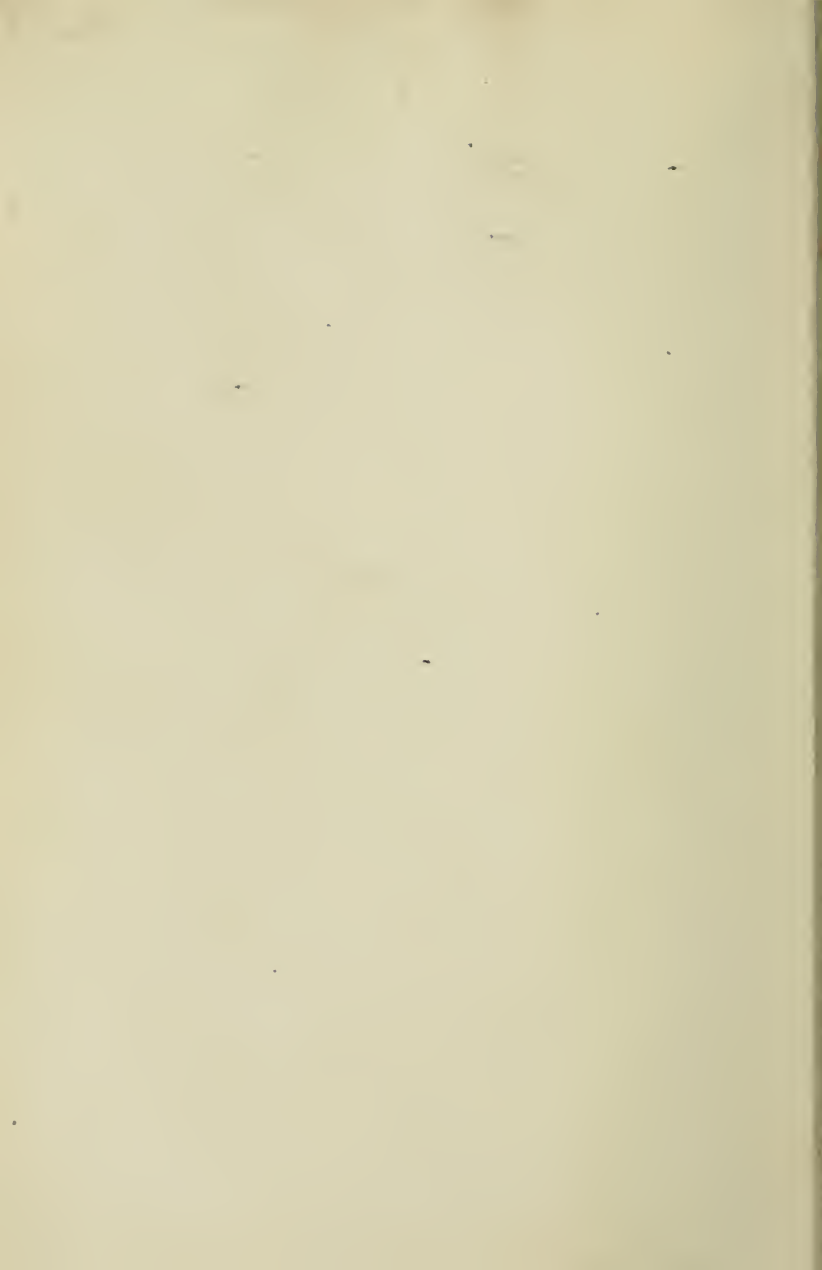
And that he should do so is to his credit, not to his disgrace.

If every man, who entered Parliament, fought for his own hand, independently of party ties, no power on earth could prevent the constant recurrence of scenes in the Commons.

THE END.



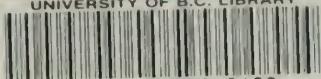




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